

CHEROKEE ADVOCATE

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John L. Adair, Editor

INDIAN COUNCIL

Muscogee, Ind. Ter.,  
Dec. 12, '74.

At the sessions of the Council of the United States Indian Peace Commissioners with the delegates of the Cherokee, Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw and Seminole tribes, yesterday and to-day, the discussion took a wide range, and was participated in by a large number of the delegates, and must have been an occasion of great interest, judging from the number of Indians outside of the delegation who were in attendance, and the close interest manifested by all in the "big talk." The new church building, just completed, was filled during the session, a few ladies being present, and the presiding officer, General Fisk, found it difficult to repress the bursts of applause aroused by the fiery and earnest eloquence of some of the favorite Indian Warriors.

Commissioner Lang said: "During the early part of my life I became acquainted with your fathers under peculiar circumstances, and have traveled many thousand miles since in your behalf. I know of no abatement of my intense interest for you from that time to this, and it troubles me exceedingly at my age of 75 years to see or know of anything arising against either of you. I call on you to witness, and all in the United States, if there is anything against me in my feelings or acts toward you. This intense interest has brought me here with these other gentlemen whose unselfish desire for your welfare is so manifest. When I saw this interest manifested by this newboard that I should accompany them, and by the President and Secretary of the Interior also, I consented to come. I am united with this board now present -- General Fisk, Colonel Hammond, and Rush Roberts.

In an interview between the members of this board and the President, the latter expressed an earnestness such as I have never seen in him before, that he should, while he had the power, try to have something done to help you. I reiterate that President Grant feels the importance of the matter so deeply that he is determined to make every effort while in power to carry out his plans. I spent an evening with the Secretary of the Interior the night

before I left; he is your friend. The President, Secretary of the Interior, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wished us to come here and see what could be done for you, and to interchange views. From knowledge that we have, and the manifested doings of wicked men among the Indians, I wish to do what we can for you and to do it now. I have spent many sleepless nights for you. I dread the future for you. This commission will give more in detail what I and they feel."

Col. C. G. Hammond then said: "I desire to show my appreciation of the good feelings Friend Lang has expressed, having like him lived seventy years and spent the time in industrious work for the good of all. When assembled in Washington our first inquiry was as to the people of this Territory, in what way we could do the most good. If we knew what legislation you wanted we would try and influence that legislation. We came to hear what you want, to hear your views so expressed that we might understand them. If your rights are already protected, if you are as happy as can be, our trip will be in vain. We have heard that you are not as well protected and happy as you ought to be. We want to protect you. We look upon your future, pressed as you are upon all sides by increase of population, with great anxiety.

I know nothing of you but what I heard. I want you to tell us frankly what we can do."

General Fisk, in introducing Mr. Roberts, a member of the board, said also that he was a member of the Christian body of Friends, the Quakers, whose hearts throbbed with interest for the Indian Race.

Mr. Roberts said: "Brother, I appear here with not much to say -- it is not necessary for me to define my position as commissioner. Although I cannot claim to have been long a member of the board, yet several years have elapsed since I first felt an interest in you, and am trying to do you good, although in a different field. I will do all I can for the elevation of the Indians. This is the first time I have had the pleasure of visiting your country. I have met some of you in Washington before. I am willing to work faithfully with my brethren here for you."

Colonel Wm. P. Ross, in behalf of himself and the Cherokee delegates present, said: "I am pleased to remark that we reciprocate your expressions of good will and desire for our advancement, and for that of our people. I move we adjourn for our Cherokee delegates to confer.

Chief Samuel Che-co-te said he was glad to hear

the kind remarks of the commissioners and to know the interest the President and Secretary of the Indian Department took in their affairs. He was pleased to hear of them. He wished to say the representatives of the Muscogees did not know the object of the mission, and they had the same desire as the Cherokees for a conference before they replied.

Major Factor, in behalf of the Seminoles, said they also desired to confer. They were not aware of the wishes of the commissioners when they were summoned to the council. They came hastily, and wished to consult upon the words they had heard.

Judge Fulson, in behalf of the Choctaws, said his people felt grateful to the commissioners. His people appreciated the visit. They were not authorized to speak for those behind, as they were not informed of the wishes of their great father, the President. They needed assistance. They felt crushed and looked to the United States for help. He thanked the commissioners for coming to them.

Colonel John Jumper, for the Seminoles, agreed with Chief Ross in his desire for time to prepare an answer. His nation had treated with the United States, and he asked that nothing might be done to militate

against those treaties. He wanted to know if it was the desire of Congress that there should be a change in their treaties. He would like a conference.

General Fisk said it was understood by all familiar with the feelings of President Grant, that there could be no radical change that did not receive the approval of the Indians themselves. That they might know their wishes respecting any change was the reason they came.

Major Pleasant Porter inquired, as a representative of the Creeks, the exact change desired by President Grant of them.

Chief Ross desired to know if the commissioners had any other proposition to submit.

General Fisk said he would refer them to the report of the Secretary of the Interior, which presented the views of the President, and hoped they would conform to the views of these delegates.

Commissioner Lang was willing to yield up every thing to their wishes and ways if it would protect them. He said: "I believe it is fully the design of the President and Congress to protect you in your rights, and it is my prayer that the acts of Congress may place you beyond the reach of bad white men and pro-

tect you. With our peculiar political organization it may be impossible for you to be fully protected. We fear the Democratic party will wrong you, and we wish to do what we can before they get into power."

Colonel John Jumper, who is a full-blood Seminole, said: "Our people who have heard the remarks now know the idea of those who claim to be friends, I think, and understand the remarks in full. There may be some who think them good. -- They do not suit me at all. I am speaking what my heart says, and also for my people. I feel from the remarks that I am on a log in deep water, very deep, on the tip end of the log, and I think I will drown. I think, under the law, my people will drown. I differ with the speaker, -- I can say for myself, I can rely on treaties; they are strong; if not strong enough to protect us, nothing can. If the United States wish to break the treaty they can do so. I will take no action myself to break a treaty. I hope no action will be taken."

Chief Che-co-te said the commissioners had made several remarks and some of them he had understood. They wished to know what the Indians want? The suggestions made by the Secretary of the Interior would only embarrass the Indians. These parties he speaks

of might originate a bill that would seem to benefit and it may be amended in Congress and then be disastrous. It was eighty-four years since the Muskogee people became related to the United States by treaties. They had looked upon the government as their protector. The United States must see the treaties are not violated. He had known of the United States increasing in wealth and power. The Creeks were glad to know of the prosperity of the white people. They would observe the treaties, and feel that they would be better to remain as they were.

There was a time when the Indians east of the Mississippi River came and made a treaty in which the government promised a home and protection. They desired to be carried out the promises made to their fathers then. When they lived east they loved their homes, their nation, their name; they wished to remain; they agreed to leave them for a home that should be a home forever. In the treaty of 1866 the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, said we should be friends, and he was to preside over our intended councils in the Indian Territory. When the Grand Council was in session they invited the wild tribes of the plains to join them. Great good had been done. The Grand Council had advised the Indians

to stimulate agriculture, schools, christianity, and industry, and to teach the wild Indians of the plains. The Creeks have good schools, supported by the government of the Indian Nation, and desire to go on and carry out the laws. The Creek Mission and schools were active in promoting Christianity in accordance with their treaties. The wild countries were prospering, and if the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, the Indian Commissioners, and the United States Indian Agent would assist them they would continue to prosper. Muscogee people had but just been educated a little and could not cope with the white men as yet. When the Creeks lived east of the Mississippi their lands were sectionized. They mixed with whites under the laws of the State of Alabama. Under those circumstances they found they could not move. They had tried it. In many instances families lost their homes and all they had, and their title to their land also. When not enlightened and educated, coming in contact with the whites, the ignorant must be the losers. If the suggestions of the Secretary of the Interior were carried out the people feared the same thing would occur again.

He hoped the commissioners would take their side and see that no legislation by Congress was had

to their injury. He yet hoped the American people were honest and that the statesmen who enrolled would be respected.

Colonel Hammond asked, first, had they any evils not redressed -- such as horsestealing, murder, etc., not cured by their government. Second were they as happy as they ought to be; if they had as good a government as the people of Michigan have. Was all peace and prosperity under the present order of things.

Major Factor (Seminole) replied: "I am safe in saying I and my people are satisfied -- we have no trouble; all our Indians are obedient to the law, and as far as I know my Creek and Chickasaw neighbors also. If we have horse thieves we arrest and try them and are satisfied, and for murder also. Turbulent people trouble us occasionally. I am sorry when our brethren make such good remarks that we cannot accept them. Sometimes a child is ignorant of what is good for it, and is contrary. May be we are so. I am a Christian it is my business to report my people peaceable. We make out meat and our bread -- we have churches and schools. The remarks I hear may be good -- they make me feel bad. We have tried to live in peace."

Mr. Bushyhead, Cherokee, Major Porter, Creek,

and Judge Vann made a few remarks agreeing with what had been said by their brethren, and the Council adjourned till 9 a. m. to-day.