

JOHNSTON COUNTY CAPITAL-DEMOCRAT

Tishomingo, Johnston County, Oklahoma  
Thursday, May 25, 1916  
Vol. 13, No. 39  
W. C. Geers, Editor

EDITORIAL ON CHOCTAW AND CHICKASAWS

The 11,981 restricted Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians who were left under government supervision at the time Congress removed the restrictions on a majority of the members of these tribes are to be given a chance at complete self control through the work of the competency commission which has just been sent into the field by Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane. Tests of the competency of individual Indians will be made during the next three or four months and those who are able to make proper showing will be made citizens in the fuller sense of the word; cut loose from government supervision altogether and placed in complete control of their own affairs.

The members of the competency commission who have just arrived in McAlester, are Frank A. Thackery, chairman of the commission, and Julian H. Fleming, associate member. They will visit the Indians personally at their

homes and examine into their qualifications to manage their own business affairs. It is estimated that the work will require at least three month's time.

The acts of Congress removing restrictions left 2,481 restricted Chickasaws and 9,500 restricted Choctaws, a total of 11,981 in the two tribes.

It will be the first work of a competency commission among Oklahoma Indian tribes Mr. Thackery said.

#### Free Indian Government Goal

Under the long continued plan of government supervision, the American Indian has become a bewildered people, Secretary Lane declared in his last annual report to congress. Removed from home to home and finally placed under a supervision where government agents hold their money, buy their food, build their homes and look after the most minor details of private affairs the Indians are at a loss to know just what their status in society has become. But "the way out is gradually and wisely to put the Indian out," Secretary Lane declares. "Our goal is the free Indian. The orphan asylum idea must be killed in the mind of the Indian and the white man. The Indian should know that he is upon the road to enjoy or suffer full capacity."

The government's plan to bring this about is set forth by Secretary Lane as follows:

'What should the test be in passing upon the fitness of one who is to be sent out into the world? Plainly his ability to handle himself, to care for himself so that he will not become a charge on the community. To be a rich Indian is not a qualification, for his wealth may indicate, and generally does, nothing more than good fortune. In the land lottery some drew prizes and some blanks. Nor should the degree of blood be the test, nor education. For many of those who are wisest in counsel and most steady in habits and sturdy in character are uneducated full-bloods. The man who can do for himself is the man to be released. And he is the man who thinks not in terms of the Indians' tomorrow. One whose imagination can take that leap and whose activities will not lag behind. It is to be remembered that we are not looking for an ideal Indian nor a model citizen, but for one who should no longer lean upon the government to manage his affairs.

"We are for control less and to help more. Paternalism is to give way to fraternalism. The teachers we need are helpers, farmers and nurses, who may not know

how to write ideal reports but to know how to trust and secure trust. There is no way by which an Indian can be made to do anything, but experience justifies the belief that there are many ways by which he can be led.

"To turn the Indian loose from the bonds of government control, not in great masses, but individually, basing this action upon his ability to watch his steps and make his way, not in any fool's dream that he will advance without tripping, but in the reasonable hope that he will develop self-confidence as he goes along; to destroy utterly the orphan asylum idea, giving charity only to the helpless and in gravest emergencies: to teach the Indian that he must work his way, that the government will no longer play the part of Elijah's raven; to convert the young to our civilization through the creation of ambitions and desires which the blanket life cannot satisfy; to organize each group of Indians into a community of sanely guided co-operators, who shall be told and taught that this government is not to continue as an indulgent father, but as a helpful, experienced and solicitous elder brother; this program we are adventuring upon. it may be inadequate, but it is surely a long step on

the road.

"To carry out this policy there should be a continuity of purpose within Congress and within this department. The strength of the administration should be turned against the two enemies of the Indian; those who, out of sentiment or for financial reasons, keep the Indian's mind turned backward upon the alleged glories of other days and the injustices that have been done him, and those who would unjustly take from him the heritage that is his. The demands now being urged that reservations shall be broken up to make way for the white men who can use the lands to better advantage should be resisted, unless it can be shown that the Indians under proper stimulus will not use these lands, or that by the sale of a portion the Indians would be enabled to make greater use of the remainder. The Indian is no more entitled to idle land than a white man. But speculation is no use; and the Indian must be regarded as having the first call upon the lands which are now his, at least, until the white men are willing to surrender their lands when not used. Idle Indians upon idle lands, however, must lead to the sale of the lands, for the pressing populations of the West will not long

look upon resources unused without strenuous and effective protest, and the friend of the Indian who would give him his chance and would save for him his property is he who keeps in mind the thought of his future instead of his past, and that future depends upon his willingness to work."

The work among the Choctaws and Chickasaws, carrying out the policy of the government thus outlined, will begin within the next few days.