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EDITORIAL ON INDIAN SLAVE HOLDERS

The right of the negro to Indian lands and the treatment of the Indians at the hands of the government will be the two main issues with which the fight will be made for the Indian vote in the new state, that uncertain quality which means victory for the party that can corral it in the first election. The Indians themselves, through some of their leading politicians have defined the issues mentioned. Looking with an unprejudiced eye one would think that the democrats would have the best of the argument in Indian vote getting, but it must also be remembered that the republicans have been in the pie cutting business for a good many years and are still at it, and the Indian who is in politics usually likes reward for his efforts while the pie is being distributed.

The average Indian, especially of that class

which controls political matters of his nation, considers himself as far above the negro socially as does the white man. Until the civil war the Indians of the five civilized tribes were a slave-holding people. They were autocrats as strictly as were the southern white planters. An aristocratic Indian would no more work than he would fly, so long as he had negro slaves to do the work for him. This gave rise to an Indian aristocracy as distinctive in its day as was the southern gentleman. Some of these Indians, usually they were half or quarter-bloods, had great plantations and worked their slaves to advantage, getting immensely wealthy. There was one plantation at the confluence of the Verdigris and Grand with the Arkansas river where one Indian owned over 500 slaves. When the emancipation proclamation was issued freeing all slaves within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, the negro slaves of the Indians were set free along with the Alabama and Mississippi negro.

To freeing the slaves the Indians do not object as they do not as a rule favor slave holding, but they have a deep-seated resentment against the government

for forcing on the nations the ex-slaves with all the rights of their former masters. This they charge to the republican administration of 1866.

It is not an uncommon sight in this day when driving over the Creek or Seminole or Cherokee nations to find a rich farm with old buildings and a general "run down" appearance, on what was once a fine slaveholder. This farm will be in possession of a negro, usually a former slave of the original owner. The bitterness which followed the giving of slaves equal rights with Indian slave owners of antebellum days, caused many an Indian to abandon his land and leave it to the negroes entirely rather than be subjected to the taunts of the preeminent class that was created by the freedmen. Then one of these negroes would get a cabin on the land, possibly one built by his former master for the slave, and calling this an improvement he would be able to file on the land and hold it as an allotment against all comers.

The treaty making negroes citizens of the Creek Seminole and Cherokee nations was signed in 1866.

It was made in Washington. It provided that all negro slaves who were emancipated should be citizens of the

nation of which their masters were members. The leaders objected to this very strenuously, for even then the intelligent Indians saw what it meant at some future day, though the allotment of lands was not then dreamed of. The question was then to prevent the negroes from sharing in the tribal payments. The treaty was forced upon an unwilling people. The majority of the Creeks and Cherokees had taken sides with the South in the Civil war, and the government commission to make the treaty held that the Indians who had thus taken up arms against the United States must accept the terms of the treaty as dictated to them. It is also said that the Creek interpreter who was with the Creeks when the treaty was made became ill and that a negro managed to get the most favorable concessions for the negroes, and that he misrepresented to the Creeks what was in the agreement, and they did not know at the time they agreed that the negro had been given equal rights with the Indians.

The Choctaws and Chickasaws were a little more fortunate with their treaties than the other nations. They bitterly resisted the recognition of the negro in any way, and especially as a tribal member. The treaty

was made at Forth Smith in 1886. At that time the Choctaws and Chickasaws were forced to give to the negroes 40 acres each of their lands in order to get the government to recognize the tribal rights of the two nations. The Indians resisted but were finally forced to the terms offered by the government. This matter was called to the attention of the people in a political speech by Gov. Green McCurtain of the Choctaws.

The government has also forced the Choctaws and Chickasaws to agree that when a negro has a 40 acres of land that is not classified as the best land, he shall have the privilege of buying 20 more acres at the government appraised price, which is not one third of the actual cash value. In case an Indian takes first-class land he is not allowed but 160 acres, but he is not allowed to buy an additional 160 acres at the appraised value to bring his acreage up to the average allotment of 320 acres.

To sum the matter up the negro feels that every acre of land that a negro gets takes just that much from him and his children, and he believes

the government had no right to give the negro this land, and he looks upon it as a bribe to the negro to stand by the party which gave the land to him.

In the Cherokee nation there are 4,112 freedmen. They get an average allotment of 80 acres or a total of 328,960 acres, which at \$10 per acre amounts to \$3,289,600. In the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations there are 11,000 freedmen and they get 40 acres each or 4,330,000. The Creeks and Seminoles have 7,180 freedmen and each is entitled to 160 acres of land, a total of 1,148,000. Thus the Indian figures that the government has taken from him and his kinsmen a total of \$19,217,600 and given it to the negro.

This, combined with the ruthlessness with which the Indian treaties have been broken in nearly every instance, has made the Indian sore on the government and the republican administration and the republicans have placed over them a departmental rule of red tape that has been irksome and prolific of dissatisfaction and property loss to the Indian. These two issues are the ones with which the democrats will endeavor to capture the Indian vote.