

There were 564 Absentee Shawnees allotted land by September 22, 1891. In 1893 and 1894 the Kickapoo were allotted land and their surplus land passed to white settlement. At this time the Shawnees, Kickapoo's, Potawatomes and Iowa were all under the Sauk and Fox Agency.

Meanwhile the United States government had been gradually effecting changes in its Indian policy and its manner of dealing with the various Indian tribes. By a Congressional act of March 3, 1871 treaty-making with Indian tribes and nations was abolished. The Indian tribes were no longer recognized as "independent nations." From this time on Congress was in immediate control of transactions with Indian tribes. Treaties were no longer made. Instead agreements were drawn up and approved by the tribes. These agreements were worded much like treaties and often mistaken for treaties by many Indians, but they were not as binding in legalistic and even moral terms as far as the government was concerned. In other words, it was easier to draw up an agreement with an Indian tribe than a treaty, and an agreement was easier to set aside or disregard than a treaty.

Another change in the government's way of dealing with the Indian tribes came in 1893 when an act of Congress abolished tribal governments. The government found the traditional tribal governments difficult to deal with in many instances, and wanted to establish a simpler procedure for getting the Indians to agree to government decisions concerning their affairs.

Thus in September of 1893 the Shawnees were told by their agent that a Business Committee would be named by the government officials and would henceforth conduct their business instead of the old tribal government. This Business Committee would have seven members who would be the seven most prominent men in the tribe. The Business Committee would supercede the old tribal government. It would represent all the Absentee Shawnees in dealings with the United States, and also act in advisory capacity to individuals. The men named for this first Business Committee were Thomas W. Alford, Thomas Washington (Long Tom), John C. King, John Welch, Switch Little Axe, White Turkey and Big Jim. Alford was named Chairman. This list was approved by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, but Big Jim and John Welch refused to serve. Thomas Rock and Walter Shawnee were then named to serve in their place.

The split among the Absentee Shawnees thus continued and perhaps became intensified during the last years of the 1890's. The Business Committee which was recognized by the government as having the sole authority to act on tribal affairs was apparently composed of men from the White Turkey band. Big Jim, Sam Warrior, and their followers were still opposing change, including allotment and compulsory education for their children. During these years more and more white people were coming into this part of the country. The railroad had come through in 1895, being routed through the town of Shawnee which rapidly grew and became an important marketing and shipping center. Even more white people came in with the railroad. Big Jim and his people must have felt more and more pressures from the government and from the greater number of white settlers. Soon they decided upon a plan to leave Oklahoma and emigrate to Mexico.

In 1898 Big Jim and some of his followers signed a contract with some white men concerning a plan to move to Mexico and sell their land in Oklahoma. This contract was signed in a secret council, unknown at the time to Shawnees belonging to the White Turkey group. Big Jim was taken to Washington and probably met in caucus with some members of the U. S. Senate who may have known of this Mexican plan. When Thomas Wildcat Alford and other "Progressives" heard about this contract, they sent a report of this project and affidavits concerning the state of affairs to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.