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Lowery, H. C.

Chauncey O. Moore, Supervisor  
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Lawrence Hibbs  
Field Representative

The following was obtained from  
an interview with Mr. S. R. Lewis,  
and was copied from the Vinita Lea-  
der under date, Thursday, July 23, 1903.

WOLF COON'S SPEECHES

Prove that he is opposed to rights of  
adopted whites and Cherokee Freedman.

When the Cherokee Commission composed of R.B. Ross,  
Chairman, Percy Wyly, H. C. Lowery, C. V. Rogers, John E.  
Gunter, Wolf Coon and George (Soggy) Sanders, commissioners,  
on part of the Cherokee Nation with W. P. Thompson as clerk,  
and J. C. Starr stenographer met the Dawes Commission on the  
evening of January 14, 1899, to sign the Cherokee Agreement  
known as the Muskogee Agreement, Chairman Ross announced that  
the Cherokee Commission was ready to sign the treaty. Mr.  
Bixby asked if any one had any remarks to make when Soggy  
Sanders said he refused to sign the instrument. Wolf Coon  
was on his feet instantly and said:

I<sup>u</sup> have only to make it known to the gentlemen here that  
I have repeatedly informed my colleagues that I could not  
approve conditions in the agreement and I reserve the right  
of withholding my name; there is a document that I could not  
approve."

The agreement was signed at 8:45 p. m. by all of the members of the Dawes Commission present and by all of the members of the Cherokee Commission except Wolf Coon and Soggy Sanders, the two, Cherokee Commissioners who refused to sign the agreement.

Mr. Bixby, chairman of the joint session of the two Commissioners then asked if any one had anything to say. Speeches were then made by R. B. Ross, John E. Gunter and Wolf Coon on the part of the Cherokee Commission and by A. S. McKennon on the part of the Dawes Commission.

Wolf Coon was pressed for his reason for not signing the Treaty and he made the following speech in the presence of both Commissions:

"Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen of the Commissions: I will make a few remarks, I have only a few words to speak and well pleased and am very glad to hear pleasing remarks come from the gentlemen of the Commission to which I have paid particular attention and more especially because I have been very anxious to solve this serious question which actuated and brought about this serious change. This is the point in which I am more particularly interested. It is the fact that representatives of the Cherokee government as well as those of the government of

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the United States have met and formulated treaties, and these treaties have been respected and honored so long as they served the purpose of the government of the United States, but on the other hand, the Cherokees have held all treaty relations as supreme and respected them. My understanding is that in the treaty of 1863 was planted the very seeds that bring up this very condition, and this change now. It was in that agreement that the freedman of the Cherokees were first mentioned, and it was on that very treaty that was subsequently considered that they had equal rights as myself in the division of my property, subsequent to the ratification of that treaty the constitution of the government was changed, and the laws so modified conferring civil rights that class of people so that they could be protected in their property. I feel confident that there was no intention on the part of the Cherokees, when these changes were made in the constitution, that by these very acts they were parting with a part of their property. At this meeting here now, it is so considered by these two Commissions, that the Cherokee Freedman, as well as the white, adopted citizens of my country, have the same rights that I have in the soil of my country. Now it has been explained that the mistake was made in 1896, and now I have it explained to me that my

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people have lost that portion of the assets of my government to which they were entitled. Along this line in speaking of the gratitude of the Cherokee government, it was made in the law, that citizens of the United States might marry citizens of the Cherokee Nation. Little did the lawmakers believe when they were making those laws, that these people, inter-married whites, should share in the patrimony of the Cherokee people.'

"Little did I believe it until this meeting here -----  
I do not know of any one of that class of people who anticipate any participation whatever in the soil. It has been mentioned by one or the other speakers before me that the Cherokees are a benevolent people; that they were a kind people. From what I know of that class of people, the Cherokees, they are going to be termed a benevolent people. This fact could be easily recognized when the position is taken that the white adopted citizens and the freedmen have come into this country, and are to share in an equal division of the total assets of the real owners of the soil without having paid anything for it. Any people who would agree to anything like that, may well be termed benevolent. I feel quite confident that my class of people, full-blood Cherokees, the original owners of the soil of the

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Cherokee Nation, will not approve of this provision in any manner whatever, and I know of a great number of the mixed blood citizens of the Cherokee nation who will not approve of this proposition in its entirety. It is for this reason alone, for the reason that it is wresting the property from the Cherokees, the original owners of the soil, and which is justly theirs and dividing it with a class of people, the intermarried whites or white adopted citizens and freedmen, who do not own any property that I do not sign my name to this treaty with my associates here.

United States of America, Indian  
Territory Northern District SS.

J. C. Starr of lawful age being duly sworn on oath says he made a verbatim report of the speech of Wolf Coon before the Daves commission on January 14, 1899, and the above and foregoing is a correct transcript of his stenographic notes thereof.

J.C. Starr.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 17th day of July, 1903.

D. H. Wilson, Notary Public.

Just before the Cherokee memorial, or treaty submitted by the Cherokee council in December 1901, to congress which was the basis for the present treaty was up before the Cherokee senate for final action, Wolf Coon opposed the passage of the memorial and said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Senate: I desire to make a few remarks in opposition to this measure, as I have a voice in the matter as much as any other member of this Senate. I want to make an amendment to section seventy-three, so that it will read that only the people who have a vested right in the lands of the Cherokee Nation shall have a right to vote on the ratification or rejection of this treaty if it is passed and submitted to the Cherokee people for final ratification. In offering this amendment you might understand that I desire that this bill be defeated, but that is not so. All the members of this senate are anxious that this bill be passed, and, in my opinion, this amendment will further the proposition. I will relate a few instances on this line that have taken place heretofore. The Government of the United States has appointed commissioners and sent them here to negotiate an agreement with us, and I had the honor to be a member of one commission to negotiate with them. In the negotiations with that commission at Muskogee an agreement was made and signed on January 14, 1899, and this agreement contained provisions similar to those contained in this proposition which we now propose to submit to the congress of the United States.

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This agreement provided for the disposition of the lands and moneys of the Cherokee nation. That agreement was referred to the people to vote on it, and ratify or reject it. When the vote was taken on the ratification of that agreement all sorts of persons were allowed to vote on it; the intermarried whites and freedmen were allowed to vote as to the disposition of the lands and moneys of the Cherokee nation, and the result was that the agreement was ratified by over 2,000 votes in the majority.

The agreement now before us contains the same provision, and there shall will be promiscuous voting allowed on this bill if passed as it is. People will vote for its ratification who are not entitled to share in the division of the lands and moneys of the Cherekees. For this reason, I propose the amendment. I believe the amendment will help the bill along, and will be met with favor by the parties to whom it is referred, for ratification at the polls, and this will cut out the people from a vote who are not interested, to wit, the intermarried whites and freedmen.

If they wish, the President of the United States to approve, they will insert the amendment which I have proposed, and I have no doubt but what it will meet with the approval of the President of the United States.