

INDIAN CHIEFTAIN

Vinita, Indian Territory
Thursday, Nov. 11, 1897
Vol. 16 No. 11
D. M. Marrs, Editor

THE CHEROKEES REPLY TO ISPARHECHER

The recent manifesto of the Cherokee nation through the commission appointed to negotiate with the Dawes commission is a strong document withal, but has the very fatal weakness of going too far and stating too much. To claim that ours is a model government, and that dangerous and uncontrollable monopoly of land does not, nor cannot exist under our system of land in common, is getting far away from the facts in the case. While it is true that the report of the Dawes commission was a misstatement of facts in a few minor particulars, it was, in the main, correct, and utterly beyond the power of the Cherokees to successfully contradict. It is a notorious fact that our lands are being, and have for years been monopolized to a shameful extent, and to the exclusion of many citizens who are without land

upon which to build a home. No good can come to the Cherokees by such glaring and unreasonable misstatements. The beauties of holding land in common can only be seen by those who are in possession of more than their share, and to regulate the settlement of the public domain, that right has never been claimed nor enforced.

And again, it is preposterous to claim that the Cherokee government is free from corruption in office. The fact is still fresh in the memory of the Cherokee people and the outside world that only a few months ago more than one hundred thousand dollars was taken from the funds of the people and put down in the pockets of a half a dozen of the plundering leaders of the Cherokees. These things cannot, nor will not be denied, and are bound, in a measure, to nullify the claims of our commissioners. It has been contended all along that there was no danger in the Delaware claim against the nation for 157,000 acres of land, and in the M., K. & T. land grant, and three of our commissioners voted in favor of treating with the Dawes commission with these same claims pending. Now they lay especial stress upon these dangers and give them as reasons why a treaty

was not made.

Why cannot the facts be stated? Why cannot the commission say that the fullbloods would not yield, and that they, the other members of the commission, were powerless to act. The protest sets forth a condition that a majority of the commission declared did not exist.

The facts as they really exist make it imperative that the lands of the Cherokee nation be allotted at the earliest possible moment. To say that it were better to remain holding land in common is going too far, and is deserving the severest criticism of their own people and of congress.

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THE CREEK ULTIMATUM OF ISPARHECHER

The Creek council has passed a resolution setting forth in a very elaborate manner the reasons for the rejection of the recent treaty with the Dawes commission. It recites portions of the treaties made with the government of the United States as a guarantee upon which they have existed as a nation. The original policy was to secure to the Indians a country free from white intrusion, where they could grow into a civilized people. After citing the treaties the document is concluded as follows:

That the result of this policy would ultimately break up our tribal government and end in the absorption of our people by the great body of the citizens in the United States is not denied. The only and final question to be decided now is, has the time

actually arrived when that policy can be consummated at once without detriment to the best interests of the Creek people. All other questions are subordinate and merely incidental to this one great question. It is proper to recite briefly a portion of the history of the Creeks. Prior to the late civil war between the states, the Creeks were farmers and herdsmen, and a very respectable portion of them were slaveholders. They lived an easy and rather careless life. Education was not deemed of such high importance then as now. This was also true of the slaveholders of the southern states. When the civil war broke out our country was located between the two contending forces. Our people, in self defense, abandoned their homes and their property fled, some joining the union army and others siding with the Confederacy. Thus was our country completely abandoned, and all our property became a prey to speculators who followed the two great armies solely for gain. At the close of the war, when we returned home, we found our country a vast wilderness. Our stock had all been driven away, our houses and fences had been burnt by prairie fires, and our former places of residence were almost unrecognizable. Then began a

movement toward a change of government in the Indian Territory should be simultaneous in all these nations. The treaties made with these nations should be uniform in principle and equally protective of their various interests. We will be the principal beneficiaries of any good that may result from a change of government; and we alone will suffer from the confusion and hardships which will necessarily follow the immediate breaking up of these tribal governments against our protests.

The Congress of the United States has at no time been burdened with petitions from the great body of the white people in our country, complaining of grievances or asking for a betterment of their condition, nor has any complaint gone up to Congress from the Indians of the territory. It is, therefore, incomprehensible to us why this great pressure should be brought to bear upon us for the breaking up of our country. The commissioners on the part of the United States have threatened us with disruption of (our) government if we do not by (treaty) at once agree to allot our (lands) and surrender our right of (self) government. The Congress of (the) United States has passed an (all) Indian appropriation bill approved

June 8, 1897) depriving us (of) the jurisdiction guaranteed to us by treaties after January 1, 1898. With this flaming sword as an everlasting threat hanging suspended over us by, as it were, a single thread, our commissioners were induced to sign the agreement of September 27, 1897. This is a repetition of the coercion under which our delegates signed the treaty of Fort Smith in 1866, by which we agreed to sell Oklahoma, one-half of our country, comprising over 3,000,000 acres of land, at 30c per acre. There might have been some slight excuse at that time in using coercive measures, but now thirty odd years since that great conflict ended, we have the right to demand justice and fair play. It has been announced to be the purpose and desire of the United States to protect the interests of the majority of the people of our country in devising a plan for the allotment of lands and in the admission of our people into citizenship of the United States.

Upon a thorough understanding of the intent and scope of the treaty, as interpreted and explained by our commissioners, the treaty was rejected by a large majority of the members of the council. No people can be accused of improper motives in an earnest

struggle for existence. In a country without money, everybody equally as poor as his neighbor, and no railroads or towns to bring trade or produce markets, we were indeed pioneers. For more than ten years there were no railroads nor towns in our country. We however, established a few neighborhood and boarding schools, which offered only a few of our children the advantage of an education. We were in this condition in 1889 when we sold Oklahoma to the United States government, and of the proceeds of said sale we deposited with the government \$2,000,000 as a permanent fund, and from the interest thereon we set apart a permanent additional school fund of \$50,000 per annum. We then erected large brick and frame school buildings and increased our neighborhood schools to thrice their former number. Out of a total income of \$160,000 we expend \$84,000 annually for educational purposes alone. Every child of school age has now a chance of acquiring an education absolutely free to himself and parents. We do not believe that this system of education can be replaced by one better suited to our people. We have in this territory five separate local governments, neither one nor two of which can constitute a state sufficiently large to be admitted by congress. The

desire to thoroughly consider their condition and endeavor to stand by those principles of government which have brought them prosperity and contentment in the past. In this position which we take we only rely upon the honesty and fair-mindedness, not only of the commissioners of the United States, but of the distinguished members who compose the two houses of congress.

Approved November 3, 1897.

ISPARHECHER

Principal Chief, M. N.

THE DAILY CAPITAL

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RESOLUTION BY ISPARHECHER

Whereas, the principal chief, in a special communication to the national council, dated Oct. 2, 1897, expressed the opinion that the governmental policy of the Indians of the territory should be changed from the present to one that shall be conceived and formulated by the Indians for the common good of all, in the words following, towit:

"The time has now come when, in my opinion, the citizens of the five nations should come together and agree upon the establishment of a general government by which we might perpetuate our right of self-government," and

Whereas, his plan for inaugurating such a policy is clearly indicated by his following words, to-wit:

"I therefore suggest that you constitute a delegation consisting of a suitable number of your most competent

citizens for the purpose of visiting the other nations with a view of agreeing upon a time and place for the assembling of a constitutional convention to be composed of duly authorized delegates representing the several nations; that is to say, a convention having for its purpose the framing of a general constitutional government that will afford protection to the Indian owners of the country," and

Whereas, it is known to be the avowed purpose of the United States in all the changes, which, without our consent, it proposes to extend over us, to prepare us thereby for an honorable ultimate entry into the family of the United States, and

Whereas, if the pernicious course of segregation and violation of our territory and natural rights now pursued in the name of that policy and purpose is continued, we will, when the government decides to admit us into the sisterhood of states, have been shorn of almost everything we value most, and will have to enter therein -- if at all -- empty-handed and poor, and

Whereas, we believe it to be of paramount importance that united, definite action shall be taken by

the Indians to preserve the rights still left to them, and that notwithstanding the unfriendly attitude of congress as seems to be indicated in recent acts, it is nevertheless the wish of the United States to benefit us, not injure us, and it therefore cannot but respect and honor an earnest, honest purpose and effort on the part of the Indians of this territory. Its weak, but confiding work to hasten the consumation of its own policy, namely, the eventual merging of the Indians of the territory into a compact member of the American union for their production and growth in civilization; and confidently expecting its friendly aid in any step we may take toward a higher advancement than has heretofore been proposed; and believing further that such a movement is advised by present conditions, and should, if possible, be made by the united, brotherly action of the Indians of the Indian Territory, we, your special committee recommend that

Be it resolved, by national council of the Muskogee nation, that a delegation of two competent citizens to be nominated by the principal chief and conferred by the national council shall be constituted

by the action of the present session, whose duty shall be to visit at once the national councils or other proper authorities of the other four civilized tribes of the Indian Territory and if possible obtain their co-operation in effecting an international convention at some suitable time and place in the Territory, to be composed of duly accredited delegates from each tribe participating therein; the convention so meeting to consider the advisability of formulating the basis and providing the necessary requirements of a constitutional government and proposing the same for the common government of the citizens of the five civilized tribes of the Indian Territory, the same to be republican in form and which, conforming as near as may be to the principles and forms obtained in neighboring state organizations, shall be deemed adequate to the proper protection of the varied interests of each of the nations concerned, the said delegation of two, shall at the earliest possible moment report the result of its mission to the principal chief, which if favorable to the object of this resolution, there he shall at once serve notice to the duly authorized representatives of the Muskogee Nation who

shall have been previously elected and commissioned members of said convention, who shall, at the time and place designated, join in the deliberations of the convention under the acts of the national Council and instructions of the principal chief as shall be provided.

A bill is now pending in council that if passed, will embody the ideas set forth in this report.