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A MEETING OF THE FIVE TRIBES IN CONGRESS

Last week's two meetings of the joint Indian Committees have accomplished much. Their work is becoming systematized, and it would seem that if they continue to make the same degree of progress, their labors will soon be completed, and their recommendations put into the form of a bill, and the bill placed on the calendars of the House and Senate for final consideration.

The proceedings had at the two meetings were as follows:

At the Monday meeting there were present Senator Jones, and Congressmen Curtis, Little, Fisher, Lacey and Benton. Senators Platt and Pettigrew being absent the discussions were general. Major McKennon of the Dawes Commission having been wired to Washington, was present. He was with the Committee at its entire session of

more than two hours. The whole situation was gone over, and Major McKennon presented the views of the Commission as to the scope and extent of proposed legislation, touching especially on the status of allotment and townsite questions.

The Curtis Bill was before the Committee as a basis for their labors. At the close of the meeting Major McKennon was authorized to prepare the views of the Commission on these questions, in the form of amendments to the Curtis bill, and present them to the Committee at its Thursday meeting.

At the Thursday meeting there were present Senators Platt and Jones and all the members of the House Sub-Committee, as above mentioned. Major McKennon was present with the work that had been assigned him. The amendments were taken up and discussed at length. He and Mr. Curtis were instructed to take the amendments of the Commission, the suggestions of the Committee at its two meetings, and the Curtis bill, and incorporate the same into a bill. This they are now doing and the result of their labors will be reported to a meeting of the Committee which will be called as

soon as they are ready to report.

The two all absorbing questions that command the attention of the Committee are: Allotment and townsites.

It is now understood that the bill being prepared will contain the following provisions:

The allotment of the use and occupancy of the land of the Indians, reserving townsites and coal and mineral lands from allotment; and that when the allottee is placed in possession of his allotment he may go into the United States Courts and ask that the fee be decreed to him.

This decree vesting the fee in the allottee shall make 160 acres inalienable as a homestead, with the privilege of disposing of the remainder under certain restrictions imposed by the court.

The townsites are to be surveyed, platted and appraised, and those in possession of improvements authorized to deposit a percentage of their appraised value into the Sub-Treasury of the United States at St. Louis, as an offer to the tribe, This is practically the provisions of the Flynn bill of last session.

The bill will further provide for the

levying of a municipal tax for schools and city improvements.

If opinion, publicly expressed, counts for any thing the Committee will lose no time in agreeing upon a bill, and asking its passage by Congress.

The settlement of the Indian Territory question has been an issue during the whole time Judge Little has been in congress, and during this time he has given that branch of legislation a great part of his time, and a very thorough and painstaking consideration. Among other things, it has been his idea to do justice first to the Indian and also to the white citizen who has gone there and made improvements upon the invitation of the Indian. Whenever allotment comes, the bill will of course carry with it a provision for putting the allottees in possession of such lands as may be given him. Judge Little has prepared an amendment for the protection of the white citizen who may be in possession of such allotment and who has made valuable improvements thereon. The amendment will be presented and pressed at the proper time, and reads as follows:  
"Provided always that the person in possession

may, in defense of such action, show that he is and has been in peaceful possession of such lands and that he has, while in such possession, made lasting and valuable improvements thereon; that he has not enjoyed the possession thereof a sufficient time to compensate him for such improvement. Thereupon the court or jury trying said cause, shall determine the fair and reasonable value of such improvements, and the fair and reasonable rental of such lands for the time the same have been occupied by such person; and if the improvements exceed in value the amount of the rents with which such person should be charged, the court in its judgment, shall specify such time, as, in the opinion of the court, will compensate such person for the balance due, and award to him possession such time, unless the amount due be paid by the claimant, within such reasonable time as the court may specify. If the finding be, that the amount of rents exceed the value of the improvements, judgement shall be rendered against the defendant for such sum, for which execution may issue."

The question of the protection of church, school and grave yard lots, when allotments are made, has been discussed. On this, Judge Little will present the following amendment: "Reserving from allotment, all grounds or plots of land, that may be necessary and proper for school and church houses and grounds, and cemeteries."

Mr. J. N. Thornton, the brilliant young editor of the Eufaula Journal, arrived last week, and will remain here until the disposition of pending Indian legislation. Mr. Thornton is sent by the Board of Trade of Eufaula, to look after the townsite interests of that town. He is at work on that line. He has interviewed most of the members of the Indian Committees, and will join with the other townsite delegates in presenting to the committees such facts as may be necessary to guide them to intelligent action.

Rolly McIntosh, Second Chief of the Creeks, is one of the most magnificent specimens of physical manhood, among the Indian delegations here. I met him some days ago and requested that he say something to the people of the Territory through my papers. He discussed the matter

briefly in the Creek language with his companion, while I looked on blankly. The result of the conference was, that if I would call at his room in a few days he would give a statement for the Territory papers.

Many letters are being received daily by members of the Indian Committees from those in the several nations, who have been refused citizenship by both the Dawes Commission and the courts. As to whether or not the question will be taken up by the committee and reopened, remains to be seen. One member in answering a letter of this character, makes use of the following language: "Recognizing the difficulty and embarrassments of the question, Congress erected as fair a tribunal as it could, for their settlement, with a right of appeal to the courts. The Dawes Commission has ruled. Those who felt aggrieved appealed to the courts, and their decisions have been rendered upon what they deemed to be grounds of justice and equity. With these facts in view, there does not seem to be any disposition on the part of congress to open the question, or to seek to modify the rulings of these tribunals of its own creation.

The report of the agents of the Interior Department, on the Creek warrant frauds, is still in the hands of the Secretary of the Interior. When asked as to what would likely be the policy of the Department carrying into effect the law of last winter, which has been suspended by the discovery of the frauds, the officials said:

"It is the probable policy of the Department to hold this money no longer than it can safely be paid out. The report has been made, and the Department is in possession of the same, but as the law appropriating this money, emanated from Congress, we will most likely await an expression of the pleasure of Congress, before proceeding further. If the Committee expresses a desire for the report we have made, we will transmit it to them."

One member today expressed the idea that a resolution would likely be presented to Congress recalling the appropriation of the \$400,000 of the Creek funds made at the last session.

The report of Superintendent Chas. D. Walcott, of the United States Geological Survey relative to the progress and status of the Indian



Territory survey, is interesting and contains many pithy facts. It states, among other things, that it is desirable to complete the survey along Red river during the winter, that the surveyors may escape the malaria of that section; that much work has been done by the survey than was at first contemplated, the additional work including the iron monuments set at every township corner, upon the brass cap of which have been stamped the township courses and elevation above sea level as determined by the running of lines of spirit levels from the base monument at Fort Smith, Arkansas; that this work will necessitate the setting of 1,300 posts and the running of 4,000 miles of spirit level; that the cost of posts has been \$2,000, and spirit level lines \$13,000; that instead of the usual number of three copies of land office plats, there have been transmitted to the General Land Office twenty copies, thus providing for future demands in connection with the subdivision of land and the settlement of land questions in the Indian Territory; that the topographic map of the Territory; will be the best yet made, and that

if it had been made independent of the regular survey, would have cost \$120,000; that it will be the best and most elaborate in existence, with the exception of that of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island; that up to this time there has been appropriated for the survey, the sum of \$500,000, exclusive of the Chickasaw nation, and that the sum of \$141,500 has been appropriated for its survey; and that the whole survey of the Indian Territory is expected to be completed by July 1st. 1898.

Chairman Curtis of the Joint Sub-Committee on Indian affairs has just issued a call for a Committee meeting to-day. This means that the bill in course of preparation by Mr. Curtis and Major McKennon has been completed and will be laid before the Committee. The bill contains the suggestions of the Dawes Commission, some of the features of the Curtis bill, and the suggestions made by the Joint Committee at its last several meetings.

From private letters it is learned that Col. J. J. McAlester, the coal and land magnate of South McAlester, is on his way to Washington to urge his views upon Congress, as to mineral and townsite matters.