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Memorial of the American Indian Mission
Association, praying the adoption of measures for
promoting the permanent welfare of the various
Indian tribes

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MEMORIAL

OF

THE AMERICAN INDIAN MISSION ASSOCIATION,

PRAYING

The adoption of measures for promoting the permanent welfare of the various Indian tribes.

—◆—
APRIL 5, 1844.

Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

—◆—

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled :

The memorial of the board of managers of the American Indian mission association

RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH :

That the said association having been organized for the special purpose of promoting the civilization and the christianization of the aboriginal tribes of America, they are well aware that the favorable action of Government, on various points deeply affecting the interests of that people, is essential to the success of the enterprise, and therefore respectfully ask leave to refer to the following matters :

It is believed that, notwithstanding the great diminution of numbers, there are yet upwards of 4,000,000 of the aboriginal race in North America. All of the tribes have had some intercourse with white men, and nearly all are perishing by causes which can only be removed by civilization. Whatever may be painful in the history of the past, it is an interesting fact that the location of about twenty tribes or parts of tribes west of the States of Missouri and Arkansas, in what they esteem a country of *their own*, and where they may enjoy among themselves the benefits of civil, religious, and literary institutions, present a cheering exception to the gloom which has obscured the red man's atmosphere. The tribes which were so far advanced in civilization as to be somewhat comfortable before their removal, now enjoy prospects of uninterrupted prosperity. The poorer tribes from the north, most of whom remained tribes of hunters up to the time of their emigration, are now improving their condition, and some of them rapidly. None of those tribes rely materially on the chase for subsistence, but all depend almost wholly on the fruits of their industry at their homes. Thus far the experiment of a permanent home, under the circumstances alluded to, in the opinion of your petitioners, highly commends the plan adopted by this Government, and which is the first

feasible plan of Indian reform adopted by any Government, and which it is hoped will be followed up, until its benefits shall be extended to the most remote or most degraded tribe.

Your honorable body must be aware that this rapid change for the better is greatly owing to new hopes inspired by the assurance of undisturbed possession, and confidence in the guardianship of the United States Government. Your petitioners would therefore respectfully solicit the attention of Congress to the following matters, an adjustment of which, they doubt not, would effectually eradicate the remains of distrust, which still haunt the hopes of those Indians, and would confirm their confidence, and greatly accelerate their improvements :

1st. Your petitioners respectfully ask the consideration of the propriety of fixing definitely, by a law of Congress, the boundaries of the Indian territory, which, it is understood, has been allotted to Indian occupancy. Bills embracing this object have been under consideration in several former sessions of Congress; and their failure to pass, your petitioners believe, was not in consequence of any thing objectionable in the design. The tribes have been taught by Government to expect this action of Congress in their favor.

2d. The Government, in 1837, selected and surveyed a tract of land central in reference to the boundaries described in the bills which about that time were under consideration in Congress, of about seven miles square, for purposes connected with the seat of government of the Indian territory. This tract has been consequently reserved from cession to any particular tribe, being intended for a district to which all the tribes should have equal claims for mutual benefits in reference to the seat of government of their territory.

Your memorialists respectfully request that Government invite the tribes, by a suitable number of representatives respectively, to meet in general council once a year, on this central and common ground, under such supervision as may be deemed proper, for the purpose of adjusting matters for the promotion among them of peace and harmony, industry, education, and virtue. And further, your petitioners respectfully pray, that as soon as it can be done consistently with the interests of the tribes, this government district be made available for settlement, under suitable regulations, to those who, from the nature of their office, or from personal inclination, are disposed to occupy the same.

Your petitioners are aware that some of the tribes that are far advanced in civilization, properly jealous of their respective rights, would not, as it is not desirable they should, consent to any measure of a general nature, which would in any degree tend to eclipse their brightening prospects as individual tribes. They are, however, equally confident that the objects prayed for, so far from abridging the privileges of those who have, respectively, adopted the forms, and are exercising the essential functions of civil government, precisely the reverse would be the result. It is known that many of the less civilized tribes have long desired such a connexion with their more civilized brethren, as is here prayed for, and no doubt exists that the latter would be particularly happy in extending to them the hand of help.

3d. With deep interest your memorialists would further solicit the consideration of the propriety of allowing a representation of one or more from the Indian territory, in the character of an agent or agents, at Washington,

during each session of Congress, with ample emoluments, attending to Indian interests, within the Indian territory. Your petitioners are happy to know that this matter was not overlooked by the framers of the bills above respectfully referred to, which have been under consideration in Congress.

4th. Aware that your honorable body is prepared to appreciate the advantages of the light of science, (if, indeed, its benefits could be estimated,) your memorialists, with increased confidence, respectfully pray that the annual appropriation for purposes of Indian reform may be increased. Argument is not within the province of your petitioners, and, if it were, they would, in this matter, forbear to indulge in it, but would barely refer to the results of appropriations heretofore made for this noble object, as the best recommendation of the measure prayed for.

As in duty bound, your memorialists subscribe, most respectfully, in behalf of the board,

WILLIAM C. BUCK, *President.*

THOMAS S. MALCOM,
Recording Secretary.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, *February 20, 1844.*