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Cherokee Nation. Memorial of the Delegates of the Cherokee Nation

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CHEROKEE NATION.

MEMORIAL

OF THE

DELEGATES OF THE CHEROKEE NATION.

MARCH 3, 1875.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

To the Congress of the United States :

The undersigned delegates, representing the Cherokee Nation, noticed in the proceedings of the Senate of the 10th ultimo that Mr. Ingalls, of Kansas, presented what purports to be a "memorial" of the "Cherokee Nation of Indians," praying for the appointment of a commission to inquire into alleged irregularities of officers and agents intrusted with the management of certain funds belonging to that nation.

In reply thereto we desire simply to say that, while we do not fear any investigation that might be made by any committee of the Senate of the United States, we must and do deny the right of the Senate, or any department of the Government, to make the investigation proposed, if such investigation looks to any interference by the Government, or any of its officers, with the local affairs of the Cherokee Nation. The memorial referred to is, we believe, inspired by the same influence that has so often been brought to bear to disturb the peace of the Indian Territory. It is of the same spirit and in keeping with other attempts to destroy our people by misleading Congress.

We are in receipt of letters from several of those whose names appear to the so-called memorial, denouncing it as a forgery, at least so far as they are concerned. The mayor of the town of Vinita, in a letter, says: "I and many others here are pained to find our names have been *forged* to a petition gotten up by some person or persons as yet unknown to us and forwarded to Washington, that is likely to cripple your efforts on behalf of the Cherokee people. It places the persons whose names are put to the instrument in a false position before the authorities at Washington, as well as before the citizens of the Cherokee Nation. That there are a very few who did sign it I do not doubt, but four-fifths of the names signed to it are forged, several of whom are dead, and have been dead for years."

By an examination of the names appended to this memorial, it will be perceived at a glance that it is numerously signed by families, by men, their wives, and their children, boys and girls, without regard to age. Only a few dozen different names appear thereto. There are twenty-one Wards, eight Fields, nine Wileys, ten Diols, twelve Barkers, nine Ballards, twelve Becks, nine Gunters, and seven Prathers, most of whom are children of both sexes; and all of which goes to show conclu-

sively that the "memorial" is an attempted fraud upon the Congress of the United States. Add to this the fact that several of the names have never appeared upon the census-rolls of the Cherokee Nation as citizens, but are and have been reported as *intruders* to the United States agent for removal, and you have the motive of those who are trying to engineer themselves and their schemes into notice at the expense of others standing in the way of their selfish masters, who, having failed to realize their longings for Indian lands by the passage by Congress of some one of their many "territorial" schemes, now secretly, by thrusting these vagabonds forward, endeavor to obtain the same result by paralyzing the operations of the Cherokee government, upon the pretext of redressing some imaginary irregularity in the administration of the same.

The undersigned have no disposition to go into the details of the memorial by going back in national history beyond the period of the flood for the purpose of gratifying the malignancy of the traitorous few who malign their country and race to gratify personal animosities. Nor would we be drawn into this response but for the assurance that non-citizens of the Indian Territory, men as sordid as the corporations they represent, have adopted this means for overthrowing the government of the Cherokee Nation.

As to the charge of usurpation of the executive power of our nation by the present incumbent, Hon. William P. Ross, we may be permitted to say that the election of an officer of the Cherokee Nation is not a matter to be reviewed by any authority other than that of the Cherokee Nation. We claim and believe that he was elected to the office he now holds in strict compliance with one of the plainest provisions of the constitution of the Cherokee Nation. We have only to say that no party, or even a faction large enough to be worthy of notice, has ever called in question the authority, or right to his seat, of the present chief executive of the Cherokee Nation.

The Cherokee Nation has for some time devoted its efforts to the establishment of certain educational and charitable institutions, especially to the ones designed for homes for the orphan and indigent children of the nation, and for the blind, aged, insane, &c.; and if in furtherance of this, to us, laudable desire, large sums of money have been expended, the responsibility is not entirely with Mr. Ross, but must be shared in by the national council authorizing the expenditure. True, he has done much to enlarge the means of education, to perfect a better system, and to lead his people to a higher civilization. These are the real crimes against which his enemies so persistently direct their efforts. The founding and endowment of institutions of learning and charity, and the steady advancement of the people of the Territory in all the elements of civilized life, are so many obstacles in the way of disturbing the present relations of the people of the Territory to the Government; hence these attacks and aspersions. As to his connection with the orphan asylum and funds, there is nothing of which he, or those he represents, have cause to be ashamed. It is true there was a difference of opinion as to location, and as to the persons or religious sects to have whole or partial charge. All these questions are settled. Any attempt to unsettle the matter would only defer the erection of these institutions and postpone their organization indefinitely. So far as the property purchased for the orphan asylum is concerned, we will only say that it cost twice as much as it was bought for, and will be one of the most valuable endowments of that institution. Work has been actively going on on the two seminary buildings, the orphan asylum, and the home for the blind, in-

sane, and others, under the superintendence of an able architect. We do not expect that Congress or the country will unite with malevolent crusaders against enterprises so generous and useful. In devoting a large amount of our funds to create and endow such meritorious institutions, we expect from you, not your opposition but your kind sympathy and co-operation. As to the general management of our funds we feel that we can challenge criticism. We believe that no State or Territory manages its affairs so economically. The only improper diversion of our school and orphan funds was in their seizure by the Government of the United States during the war, and they have never been accounted for to us, or returned, although these are the only part of our funds the Government of the United States has retained any control over, and that only to see that they are devoted to their legitimate objects.

In memorializing you in defense of the government and institutions of the Cherokee Nation, we are not impelled to it by any serious fear that you will, in violation of our treaties with you, attempt to despoil them. We do so, however, because this is one of the underlying wishes of our enemies. Seeking to overthrow and despoil us, they seek to cripple and destroy the Cherokee government. It is to warn you against such insidious designs that we address you.

That the petition, conceived in malice and made up by fraud, can have much influence, we do not believe. Even had the few hundred names on the petition to which we refer been genuine, they are but as a drop in the bucket, compared to the forty-five hundred voters of the Cherokee Nation who control its affairs. But when it is recollected that many of them are lawless intruders, and that it is made up of minors and of persons long dead, its flagrant character and malicious assaults must only show the character of the paper.

Representing the Cherokee Nation here, we can only respectfully ask at your hands what is due to our treaties with you, and fair dealing among men.

Respectfully submitted.

D. H. ROSS,
Chairman.
J. A. SCALES,
Cherokee Delegation.