

1-26-1831

Memorial of the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of Massachusetts, praying that all treaty stipulations with the Indians within the United States may be faithfully observed, &c.

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#### Recommended Citation

S. Doc. No. 50, 21st Cong., 2nd Sess. (1831)

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## MEMORIAL

OF

## THE PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE

*Of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of Massachusetts, praying that all treaty stipulations with the Indians within the United States may be faithfully observed, &c.*

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FEBRUARY 9, 1831.

To lie on the table, and be printed.

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

The memorial of the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, humbly and respectfully represents:

That, at the late annual meeting of said board, which was held in the month of October last, the memorialists were directed "to prepare and present to both Houses of Congress a memorial, earnestly and respectfully expressing the views and sentiments of the board on the subject of the proposed removal of the Indians residing in the States of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, to a region beyond the river Mississippi, in reference to the benevolent plans of extending to those Indians the blessings of civilization and religious instruction."

In the discharge of the duty thus assigned them, the memorialists respectfully approach the National Legislature, and offer the following statements and reasonings.

Before entering, however, upon the great subject of this memorial, it seems due to the honorable bodies addressed, and to the memorialists themselves, to state why the board deems itself called upon, in its associated capacity, to address Congress in behalf of the suffering Indian nations.

The object for which the board was formed, and which it has invariably kept in view, is purely of a philanthropic and religious nature, it being no other than the diffusion of Christianity, with civilization in its train, among heathen nations, wherever accessible, without distinction of country, climate or nation. In the pursuit of this object, the board sought access to the southwestern tribes of Indians in the United States, as soon as possible after the termination of the last war. The Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury, an agent and missionary of the board, while proceeding to the Cherokee nation in the year 1816, had various interviews with the members of the Government, and particularly with Mr. Crawford, then Secretary of War, on the subject of the civilization of the above mentioned tribes. As the result of these in-

terviews, it was stipulated by the Government that two-thirds of the necessary expense of erecting the first buildings for the commencement of schools for Indian children, should be defrayed from the treasury of the United States.

In accordance with this arrangement, buildings were erected in the Cherokee nation the next year, in the Choctaw nation one year later, and among the Cherokees of the Arkansas in 1820. At these places, the contemplated schools were commenced as soon as possible, and have been continued ever since.

About the period last mentioned, a law of Congress took effect, by which \$10,000 annually were appropriated to the civilization of the Indians. This sum was apportioned by the Secretary of War among the different benevolent societies by which schools for Indian children had been instituted. The establishments of the board being more numerous and more expensive than those of any other society, the aggregate of the sums assigned to schools under its care was considerable. In some years it was nearly \$5,000. For the year preceding October 1, 1830, it was \$4,250, and for the current year it is \$1,690.

This allowance from the Government of the United States to the missionary schools under the care of the board has always been gratefully received and faithfully expended. It is not to be understood, however, that the expenditure of money for the Government, in promoting the civilization of the Indians, is to be viewed in the light of a personal favor conferred on the directors of the societies, or the missionaries and teachers by whose care and assiduity it is applied; for, as a general thing, every additional expense creates additional labor and responsibility. But, as an expression of benevolence on the part of the Government of the United States towards the Indians, it was gladly received, and cheerfully applied to their benefit.

An erroneous impression has gone abroad to this effect—that the missionary establishments among the Indians originated solely in the liberality of the Government; that they were sustained almost entirely by the same liberality; and that the missionaries and teachers had been enabled, as a consequence of what they received from the national treasury, to make for themselves very comfortable and even desirable residences. The fact is, however, that the missions to the Indians were planted and undertaken before any provision was made by the Government on the subject, and without any expectation that the Government would make them the channels of its benevolent aid in the work of civilization; that there has never been a year, in which the board did not spend four times as much from its own treasury, as was advanced from the treasury of the United States, for the schools under its care; that, during the year preceding last October, less than one eighth part as much was paid by the United States for schools under the care of the board, as was paid from its own treasury, (the donations of individuals,) for the christianization and civilization of the North American Indians. The proportion paid by Government the current year is smaller still. It is due to those excellent men and women who have volunteered their services for the instruction of the Indians, and especially to those prominent individuals among them whose names have frequently appeared in public documents, to add, that the supposition that they engaged in their self-denying employment from motives of personal ease and comfort is altogether destitute of probability, and has not the shadow of proof to justify it.

There are now in the Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations, east of the Mississippi, and among the Cherokees of the Arkansas, fifteen regular missionaries, preachers of the Gospel, under the direction of the board, twenty teachers of children and youth, with several farmers and mechanics; making, in the whole, ninety-two adult laborers of both sexes, engaged for an indefinite time, without any compensation except food and clothing during their stay, in the arduous and exhausting work of instructing the ignorant and reclaiming the uncivilized. The number has sometimes been greater, and the average has hardly been less during the last ten years. Since the beginning of these operations, fourteen missionaries and assistants have died, and more than that number have left the field of labor with constitutions so impaired that they were not capable of sustaining any service.

As the board needed correct information in regard to the character and condition of the Indians, and the effect of labors for their benefit, the most responsible officers of the institution have made no fewer than six journeys of inspection and examination of these missions. The first corresponding secretary of the board, a man of powerful talents and great benevolence, died among the Cherokees, after having passed through the Choctaw nation, on one of these exploring journeys. In the course of the other visits of this kind, the various stations were inspected, the fullest accounts received, and all the information sought which could enable the board to carry forward the work with intelligence and discretion.

The memorialists mention these facts for the purpose of showing that although the ordinary business of the board is transacted at a distance from the seat of these missions, yet the real state of the Indians, and of the operations designed for their good, may be much better known by the directors than it is by hundreds of respectable men who live within twenty miles of the Indian boundary. This will be still more apparent when it is considered that a continual correspondence is necessarily in progress between the missionaries and their directors, so that scarcely a week has elapsed, for the last thirteen years, in which letters were not received directly from the Indian country, written by men of unquestionable veracity, who had no interest in deceiving.

It was probably for these reasons that the officer at the head of the Indian bureau, as it is termed, acting under the immediate direction of the present Chief Magistrate of the United States, addressed a letter to the corresponding secretary of the board, in the month of June, 1829, requesting his opinion on the subject of the removal of the Indians. This fact, if none of the preceding, will exonerate the memorialists from the charge of improperly interfering with a subject which is, in the view of the memorialists, not merely political, but eminently of a philanthropic and moral character.

Besides, when the first missions were established among the Cherokees, some of that tribe were extremely distrustful of the intentions of the Government and people of the United States. They feared that their land would one day be taken from them without their consent. On all public occasions, the agent of the United States took the pains to assure the Indians that their fears were groundless; that the United States were bound by treaty not to take their land without their consent, nor to permit any intrusion upon their land. The missionaries felt bound by the nature of their connexion with the Government, and by the common principles of humanity, to repeat the same assurances, and to say that the Government and people of the United States would always fulfil their engagements with Indians;

that the meaning of the treaties was clearly understood by both parties, and would never be disregarded by the General Government.

The memorialists, therefore, feel bound, speaking in the name and behalf of the board, to address Congress in their associated capacity, not only from a regard to the wants and sufferings of the Indians, but, also, from a regard to the character and consistency of missionaries and agents, who have been intrusted by the Government with the expenditure of the civilization fund, as well as from respect for the Government, with the administration of which the memorialists have had' correspondence for the last thirteen years.

After these statements and explanations, which seem to the memorialists proper and necessary, they proceed to assign reasons, why, as they are constrained to think, it does not comport with the honor of the General Government, nor with the accomplishment of "the benevolent plans of extending to those Indians the blessings of civilization and Christian instruction," to remove them from the land of their fathers against their will.

It appears to the memorialists that "the only way of obtaining the free consent of the Indians, in their present circumstances, to a removal, is to place fair arguments and suitable inducements before them; at the same time that they are at perfect liberty to accept of proposals made in reference to their removal, or to decline such proposals; and that in case of their declining, they are to be protected in their rights, as secured by treaty and by existing laws of the United States. The memorialists are not about to enter upon any legal or constitutional argument with reference to the rights of the Indians, nor to dwell upon the imperious obligation of preserving the faith of the nation inviolate. Leaving these topics for such memorialists as think it their duty to address Congress in their individual capacity, we proceed to state our apprehensions in regard to the inevitable misery which will be brought upon the Indians by their removal.

It was last year estimated by the Secretary of War that the southwestern tribes, whose speedy removal is contemplated, contain 75,000 souls. If all this number are to be precipitated into a new residence within two or three years, there seems no rational of concluding that the mass of the people will not be plunged into the greatest distress. The memorialists are aware that appropriations are made by law for providing sustenance for the emigrants during their journey, and for a year after their arrival. All preceding experiments, however, in this process of removal, prove, as has been alleged by the emigrants themselves, that such provisions answer their purpose very inadequately. There is apt to be both a failure of supplies, and improvidence in using them. It is asserted that Indians are improvident; and it is known that they are particularly so when in a state of despondency. The memorialists believe it be a fact that the mass of the individuals who compose the four southwestern tribes are decidedly and strongly opposed to a removal; that no consent of any considerable number has been, or will be, given, unless under the apprehension that laws will be imposed upon them, in the making and execution of which they have no influence, and under which, as they are officially informed from the highest sources, they cannot live. A just and humane Government, as the memorialists apprehend, will hardly place any reliance upon a consent thus given. The state of mind in which the Indians go is vitally important, as to their being able to improve their condition. If the representations made to the memorialists, from sources in which they have the fullest confidence, are correct, the Indians will generally feel that they have been unrighteously deprived of their

inheritance, in violation of justice and of the most solemn stipulations. Whether they are mistaken or not in this view of the case, there can be no doubt that the state of vexation and despondency into which they are thrown will be very unfavorable to their improvement, and even to their existence as a people. Uncivilized tribes are, indeed, to some extent, unstable as to the state of their feelings. It may be that flattering representations will, for a season, dispel the clouds of despondency which obscure the visions of futurity; but whenever the emigrant recurs to the reality of his condition, and reflects upon the land of his birth, and the manner in which he was deprived of it, the same feelings of discouragement will be apt to return.

The evils of such a condition will be greatly aggravated by the anarchy which will be almost certain to prevail. It is doubtful whether any tribe of Indians has been preserved from anarchy, or had its condition improved, by the minute agency and interference of white rulers. But there are now several examples of tribes greatly improved in their government, manners, and habits, by their own efforts, made with the advice of some of our enlightened statesmen, and by means of intercourse with our citizens. Such will be the state of the emigrants, such their dependence, and such their intercourse with officers and agents of the United States, that it cannot be supposed they will have a regular government among themselves. No plan has been adopted, either by themselves or others, for their benefit in this respect. By a sudden exercise of power over them, they have been deprived of the privilege of executing their own laws—a privilege which they had immemorially possessed; and have been threatened with severe penalties, if they enact laws in future. How is it possible that, with these facts fresh in their recollection, they should have courage and enterprise to begin a new government in new and unexampled circumstances? It may be said that the President of the United States will assure to them the right of governing themselves; but this right has been assured to them many times, and they have even been assisted in the work of new-modelling their institutions by the personal advice of some of our most distinguished statesmen. The result of a removal, in such circumstances, will be, as there is much reason to fear, that the Indians will have no laws except the arbitrary orders of military officers, issued on every new emergency; and this state of things will lead them speedily into hopeless anarchy.

Again: there is much reason to apprehend that the emigrants will be greatly annoyed by vagrant white men, who will intrude upon the Indian territory. The western side of this territory will be an illimitable desert, affording every facility for the admission of the worst of men, who have addicted themselves to the half savage life, and some of whom now traverse those regions. A military force could not exclude this class of persons, unless some portion of it were placed, within short distances, on every part of the Indian frontier; that is, on the four sides of the large parallelogram which is to be considered as the permanent residence of the Indians; and it would require more men than now belong to the regular army of the United States to leave small detachments at military stations, keeping up a constant communication with each other, on a line of 1,700 miles. The circumstances of our own country and of the world are such as to furnish a perpetual succession of unprincipled and adventurous men, who will not cease to make a prey of every exposed Indian tribe, till the last remnants of the aboriginal race are destroyed. If this result were inevitable, it would be



useless to write or speak on the subject. But your memorialists verily believe that it is easy to protect the southwestern tribes on the land of their fathers. A smaller quantity of land will satisfy them here than in any other place. Their title to a new country can never be equal, certainly not in their own estimation, to that by which they hold their present possessions. If their present limits shall prove to be larger than are necessary to their greatest prosperity, there is no doubt these limits may be reduced, in a manner perfectly fair and honorable to both parties. If their limits are not too large, the people of the United States ought not to ask for a reduction of them. Let it be firmly and decisively announced, that the intercourse law of the United States will be enforced for the protection of the Indians, and their confidence will be speedily restored.

It has been frequently represented that the tribes under consideration cannot remain where they now are, on account of the annoyance which they will experience from bad neighbors: but, as you memorialists apprehend, there is a great mistake on this subject. That the Indians cannot remain, if the laws of their white neighbors are to be extended over them without their consent, is very true; but if things were to continue, in this respect, as they have been the last forty years, there is every reason to conclude that the annoyance experienced from vagrant and lawless whites would be constantly diminishing, as it certainly has been diminishing, till intruders have become emboldened by the present state of the laws. Let it once be understood that the laws of the United States, and of all the States in the neighborhood of the Indians, respect the territorial rights of the tribes, as heretofore exercised and enjoyed by them, and there need be little apprehension from bad neighbors.

In determining the expediency of a removal, it seems vitally important that the new country for the emigrants should be thoroughly explored, and its capability of sustaining Indians fully ascertained. Your memorialists are apprehensive that permanent injury will be inflicted on the emigrants for want of this previous knowledge. Though considerable uncertainty prevails on the subject, yet it seems admitted by all that the far greater portion of the contemplated new residence for Indians (probably four-fifths of the whole) is an immense prairie, nearly destitute of wood, and deprived of running water four or five months of the year. It is hardly necessary to say that such a country can never be inhabited by a people only partially civilized. Of that part which is covered with wood, a considerable portion is represented as mountainous and barren. After these deductions are made, a small portion of good land remains; but nearly the whole of this, as your memorialists are informed, falls within the country already appropriated to the Choctaws and the Cherokees of the Arkansas. It is certain that fourteen Chickasaws, who were deputed by their countrymen to explore the new country, and who performed their tour with an agent of the Government in the fall of 1828, returned unanimously dissatisfied; and, as your memorialists are informed, the late treaty negotiated with the Chickasaws stipulates that the treaty is not to take effect unless a country can be found with which the tribe will be satisfied—a condition which, your memorialists are informed, the Indians suppose cannot be complied with.

It would seem superfluous to observe that a measure which is recommended for its humanity and benevolence cannot be entitled to that character, if whole tribes of men, with whom the people of the United States have sustained the most solemn relations for half a century, are to be suddenly, and

contrary to all their expectations, transferred by an irresistible necessity from their patrimonial possessions, for which they entertain the strongest attachments, to a new country, of which neither themselves nor the people of the United States have any accurate and definite knowledge, and concerning which there are serious apprehensions that it will never answer the purpose for which it is set apart. If there is a failure here, the case is, remediless.

Your memorialists need not ask whether it becomes a wise and provident Government, and a just and humane people, to dispose of all the great interests of the whole temporal condition of feeble and dependent allies, while nearly all the great facts which must have a bearing on that condition are still unascertained, and while these facts do not seem likely to be ascertained till the period shall have been past when they can have any influence on the decision of the question now pending.

It has indeed been asserted, though the assertion has not been sustained, as your memorialists believe, by any probable evidence, that nearly the whole territory of 600 miles long and 250 miles broad, to be set apart for the Indians, is very fertile, and capable of sustaining a great population. If this should prove to be the case, it is certain that so vast a country, with such advantages, must be immensely more valuable than the territory now in possession of the southwestern tribes. It will, therefore, be an object of intense cupidity to the neighboring whites, as the population west of the Mississippi shall increase. Considerations of this sort already fill the emigrant Indians, and those who suppose they shall be obliged to emigrate, with the most gloomy forebodings in regard to their ever having a permanent residence; and it would seem that these forebodings must exert a most disastrous influence on any plans which the Indians might otherwise have formed and executed, with reference to the improvement of their condition.

There is still another consideration respecting the place designed for the Indians, which is deemed particularly worthy the attention of the National Legislature. It is this. Immediately after the emigration of the Indians, should it take place according to what is now proposed, the emigrants will find themselves between a pressing white population on the east, and a boundless prairie on the west. This prairie, though often called a desert, produces herbage sufficient to sustain vast herds of buffaloes a large part of every year. It has no permanent human inhabitants, but is visited by various tribes of savages, most of them hostile to each other. The emigrants will, therefore, as your memorialists apprehend, be in the most unfavorable circumstances in regard to civilization. These are the very circumstances in which, as the history of this continent proves, the natives are least likely to become permanently attached to the soil, and to perceive the necessity of those institutions which are essential to civilized society. Pushed by intrusive borderers of no very inviting character on one side, and allured by game, or provoked to deeds of war, on the other, with an illimitable field for savage enterprises stretching to the Rocky mountains and beyond them, it cannot be expected that a regular community of industrious settlers will be formed and sustained. It was remarked, many years before the present question of removal arose, that Indians could never be civilized, in any great numbers, till they should be surrounded by whites, and confined within their own territories, which should have been previously reduced within moderate dimensions. This is precisely the situation of the southwestern tribes; and the recent history of the Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws, thus circumscribed in their limits, compelled to resort to agriculture, and aided



by the philanthropic and Christian efforts of their white brethren, completely justifies the theory which had been previously formed. If these advantages, so manifestly flowing from the causes here mentioned, should be abandoned, your memorialists cannot see that any hope will remain of these tribes ever becoming thoroughly civilized.

The concluding topic, which the memorialists think demands the serious attention of Congress, and which it especially becomes benevolent societies to state and urge, is the unhappy effect which a removal of the Indians would seem unavoidably to produce upon the various plans of civilization and general improvement which are now in successful operation among the three tribes last mentioned. For several years, these plans have been developed and carried forward, with the countenance and co-operation of the General Government, by benevolent societies and individuals, of various religious denominations, and in different parts of the United States. The result has been such as to afford great encouragement and hope to all friends of human happiness who have made themselves acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the case.

The whole population of these tribes has for some time relied upon the productions of the soil, and upon domestic animals, for the means of subsistence. A large proportion of the men are industrious cultivators of the soil, and of the women manufacturers of cloth for the use of their own households. The mass of the people have better dwellings, utensils, and clothing, than at any previous period of their history. Both cattle and corn are exported. The conviction is universal, that, without a laborious attention to agriculture and the common arts of civilized life, they cannot be comfortable, and rise to a proper elevation, even were it possible to preserve their community in any other way.

Schools have been established, at great expense and labor, which are now exerting a very benign influence. Places for public worship are provided, and regular Christian churches are formed, embodying a considerable number of exemplary professors of religion. A constitution of civil polity, suited to the wants of the people, and adequate to most of the purposes of good government, has been formed in more than one of these tribes. Salutary laws have been enacted and enforced; and more has been done by these people alone to banish the use of ardent spirits, than has ever been done before, with the aid of causes and agents of every description, for this immensely important object.

But, if the process of removal goes on, your memorialists apprehend that all these associations will be broken up. Inhabitants of the same neighborhood will not remove at the same time, nor be placed again in the vicinity of each other. All the bonds of society will be dissolved. Children, in the midst of their education, will be interrupted; and the delays will be so various, and their new circumstances so different from their former ones, and a relapse into habits of vagrancy and indolence so natural, that it cannot be expected that the business of education will ever be resumed by the same individuals. It is well known that, when our own people remove from the old to the new States, several years ordinarily elapse before common schools can be put into operation. During this interval many a youth loses the proper opportunity of obtaining the most necessary learning—a loss which proves to him irreparable. If this takes place among a civilized people, removing from the enjoyment of long established institutions with the intention of recommencing them again as

soon as possible, what will be the effect of a removal upon men who have just begun to form such habits as are indispensable to the whole process of civilization? Such of the natives as are truly converted to Christianity need all the aid which they can receive from each other's contiguity, familiar acquaintance, and mutual interests, to sustain them amid the trials to which they are exposed, even under the most favorable circumstances; but if they are dissociated, and thrown among strangers in the midst of untried circumstances, and bereft of the ordinary supports of religion and virtue, it would seem impossible but they must be great sufferers in their moral as well as in their temporal condition. It will be a great aggravation of all these evils, and will go far towards insuring their continuance, that the confidence of the Indians in the professions and promises of the whites will be irrecoverably lost. This, they declare beforehand, will be the result; and it seems so natural as to be nearly or quite inevitable.

The thought that the labors of so many years should be suddenly lost; that so many endearing ties should be violently severed; that so many sacred pledges (as they have been received and understood) should be forfeited; that children should be interrupted in their education, and dispersed in the wilderness; that industrious farmers should be taken from their well known acres, and allured to the chase of animals or the fortune of war; and that Christian neighbors and friends should be separated from each other, and thrown among men of characters entirely dissimilar to their own: the thought that all these evils should be brought upon whole tribes of men, without any fault of theirs, is exceedingly painful. Should it be said that these evils may be guarded against by the emigrants, your memorialists apprehend that this is too much to expect from any means and resources, any fortitude and zeal, providence and perseverance, within the reach of partially civilized men. Indeed a general removal of a community can never be achieved without exposure to a serious deterioration, in regard to morals, manners, and enjoyments; and it needs very high attainments of mind and heart to preserve a community, in such circumstances, from a most ruinous catastrophe.

It should be considered here that ardent spirits, which have always been the bane of the Indian tribes, will probably be always within the reach of the emigrants; and that white intruders will be brought to the Indian country, with this noxious article, by far stronger incitements than ever existed heretofore, as disbursements of money will be made, for years to come, by the Government of the United States to the various tribes of Indians or their accredited agents. A state of mental despondency, of disgust, and of general dislike of the treatment received, is, of all other states of mind, most favorable to the prevalence of unrestrained intemperance, from which the poor victims could never be recovered.

Since the process of removal began, the evils of intemperance have greatly increased in every tribe as yet seriously affected by that process, particularly the Choctaws, the Chickasaws, and the Cherokees of the Arkansas. Among the latter, as the memorialists have been informed in the most authentic manner, there was more intoxication, and there were more deaths from drinking whiskey, in six months of the last year, than in six years previous. This enormous increase of the evil is accounted for simply by the fact that dealers in whiskey were allured into the new Indian territory by the expectation that, in accordance with the treaty of 1828, the United States would disburse considerable sums of money to the emigrants. And

yet this very place, thus immediately invaded and defiled by unprincipled men in the pursuit of gain, has been represented as a sanctuary for Indians to which their corrupters and tempters could never gain access.

Thus have the memorialists, in the discharge of a solemn duty which they conceived to be imposed upon them, endeavored to lay before the National Legislature, in a respectful and dispassionate manner, several considerations of great importance in relation to the proposed removal of the Indians. They do not flatter themselves that they have escaped all error on the subject; but, from their long and intimate acquaintance with the tribes more especially interested, they think they cannot be mistaken in regard to most of the principles on which the preceding observations are founded.

In conclusion, the memorialists would humbly implore for our national rulers light and guidance from the unerring source of all wisdom; and would express the earnest desire that neither the Government nor the people of the United States may sanction any measures toward the aborigines of this continent which shall deprive them of any right, or place them in less favorable circumstances than at present; in regard to their progress in civilization and Christianity; but that, on the contrary, such a course may be pursued as shall sustain the good faith of the country, and, from its generosity and benevolence, redound to the lasting honor of the age in which we live.

Signed in behalf of the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

WILLIAM REED, *Chairman.*

BOSTON, MASS., *January 26, 1831.*