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Indian Tribes. Memorial on behalf of the Indians, by the United States Indian Commission.

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INDIAN TRIBES.

MEMORIAL

ON

BEHALF OF THE INDIANS,

BY THE

UNITED STATES INDIAN COMMISSION.

JULY 20, 1868.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled :

Your memorialists, on behalf of the general committee of the United States Indian Commission, beg leave to call the attention of your honorable bodies to the condition and treatment of our Indian tribes.

We are the more encouraged to make this appeal by the humane spirit which has been so distinctly manifested in your recent legislation. The appointment, amid the excitement of impending hostilities, of the Peace Commission, and the gratifying results of that commission in averting an apparently inevitable and general Indian war, one year since, afford assurance of a deep desire to do justice, and a willingness to make sacrifices for that end, which it gives us the most sincere pleasure to acknowledge.

It has long been the conviction of the humane amongst us, that our aboriginal inhabitants have been the victims of great wrongs, cruelties, and outrage; but it is only recently that the particular nature, the atrocious character, and the frightful results of these crimes have been brought distinctly before us. The recent reports of the Indian peace commissioners, and of the joint special committee of the two houses of Congress, have, in some degree, disclosed the nature and sources of them; and the disclosure is at once so painful and humiliating, as to call for the most prompt and vigorous measures of redress and remedy, for the reason that it concerns alike the honor and the interests of the nation.

We stand charged before the civilized world, by the testimony of our own witnesses, with having been "uniformly unjust to the Indians;" and it is stated by General Sherman and his associate commissioners, that this injustice has been the cause of all the wars which they have waged against us.

Among the chief causes of these wars, which have entailed the loss of many lives, and been the pretext upon which the people of the United States have been robbed of millions of hard-earned treasure, we enumerate the following :

1. The dissatisfaction of the Indians in consequence of having sometimes been betrayed into the cession of their lands by pretended treaties.

2. The constant failure of the government to fulfil in good faith its treaty obligations with the tribes.
3. The frequent and unprovoked outrages and murders of Indians by soldiers and white citizens.
4. The impossibility of obtaining justice in local courts, or of punishing white criminals, for the reason that the testimony of Indians is not allowed in those courts.
5. The unlawful occupation, by the whites, of lands not ceded nor treated for.
6. The shameful fact, that, of all the appropriations made by Congress for their benefit, but a small part ever reaches them.

It is also affirmed, by the same authorities, that the Indian race is becoming not only morally degraded, but also physically undermined, by the most loathsome disease which infests our civilization; that one of the finest physical types of man has already become seriously enfeebled; and that tribes, originally comparatively pure, are fast sinking into a grossness of vice which threatens their utter extinction.

This latter evil, in all its destructive extent, seems to be an inevitable attendant of the presence of our troops in the Indian country. All these, and many other disgraceful facts, are attested by respectable officers of the government, by a large number of Indian chiefs, and by many trustworthy private citizens.

The unprovoked butchery of several hundred peaceable Indians, chiefly women and children, by Colonel Chivington, as detailed in the official evidence above referred to, is enough to brand with lasting infamy any nation that could suffer it to pass unpunished. Our community was shocked by the action of the British authorities in India, in blowing from their guns the prisoners of war whom they had captured, but their deeds of blood pale before the infamous murders by Chivington, perpetrated under the authority and in the name of the United States!

It is not our purpose to dwell unnecessarily upon these sickening recitals, nor to express any doubt of the desire of Congress to deal justly with the feeble remnants of the powerful tribes that once owned and occupied the fair land which we now enjoy. But we respectfully submit that it is our national duty to make such provision as shall insure the faithful performance of our national obligations.

No nation can safely disregard the just claims of even the humblest class of its citizens. The promise made by General Sherman to the Indians, that their rights should be respected, and that they should be justly compensated for the necessary infringement of those rights, found an echo in the hearts of all honorable men. No nation is more sensitive to the claims and obligations of justice than our own; and we are sure that when the true history of the Indians' wrongs is laid before our countrymen, their united voice will demand that the honor and the interests of the nation shall no longer be sacrificed to the insatiable lust and avarice of unscrupulous men.

The good intentions of Congress toward the Indians have in great measure been frustrated by the want of honest and faithful agents, with sufficient power to control the rapacity of frontier practice. It is the object of the association which we represent to array on the side of justice and humanity the influence and support of an enlightened public opinion, in order to secure for the Indians that treatment which, if in their position, we should demand for ourselves. To this end we believe it may be necessary to enlist the services of capable and reliable men, independent of political or party bias, who shall not be remunerated from the public treasury, and who shall have no pecuniary interest to swerve them from the objects of their appointment.

Deeply impressed with the vast importance of our Indian affairs, as involving both our national interests and our national honor, we desire respectfully to commend them to the wisdom, the patriotism, and the justice of Congress.

Signed by direction and on behalf of the general committee aforesaid :

Executive Committee.

HOWARD CROSBY, D.D., <i>President.</i>	WILLIAM T. BLODGETT,
PETER COOPER, <i>Vice-President.</i>	LEGLAND B. CANNON,
BENJAMIN TATHAM, <i>Treasurer.</i>	EDWARD CROMWELL.
	VINCENT COLYER, <i>Secretary.</i>

General Committee.

PETER COOPER.	BENJAMIN TATHAM.
DAVID DOWS.	VINCENT COLYER.
WM. T. BLODGETT.	Rev. H. W. BEECHER.
HENRY BERGH.	Rev. S. H. TYNG, Jr.,
LEGRAND B. CANNON.	Rev. H. CROSBY, D.D.,
JONATHAN STURGES.	Rev. JAMES M. BULKLEY.
JACKSON S. SCHULTZ.	Rev. E. H. CHAPIN, D.D.
JAMES A. ROOSEVELT.	Rev. E. A. WASHBURN, D.D.
EDWARD CROMWELL.	Rev. THOMAS ARMITAGE, D.D.
GEORGE C. COLLINS.	Prof. BENJAMIN N. MARTIN.

COOPER INSTITUTE, *New York, July 14, 1868.*