Opinion on the Removal of the Cherokee

Creator: A Virginia Patriot
Date: 1830
Published in: The Cherokee Phoenix and Indian's Advocate
Source type: Newspaper Article (Adapted)

Introduction: After the passage of the Indian Removal Act, the official newspaper of the Cherokee Nation, The Cherokee Phoenix, published many articles condemning the Act. In this article, an author known only as “A Virginia Patriot” lists the problems associated with Indian removal.

Will the government compel the Cherokees to emigrate beyond the Mississippi? It would be in defiance of treaties entered into between the United States government and the Indians, in contempt of the clearest rules of truth, justice, and humanity, and disgracing those principles on which our republican government are supposed to be based.

We maintain that to compel the Cherokees to move west of the Mississippi is to have them submit to laws designed by their lifelong enemies, who desire to exterminate them. This is in effect the same as a complete expulsion of the Cherokees from their homes, the tombs of their ancestors, and in a word their native soil. This is the purpose of the Indian Removal Act. By that Act the Cherokees are compelled to leave their lands in Georgia. They are to be driven from their native lands.

The title of the Cherokees to the lands they now occupy, the lands where the ashes of their ancestors sleep, has been acknowledged by this government in no fewer than sixteen separate treaties between the government of the United States and the Cherokee Indians, who are now asserting their rights. Some of these treaties were made at a time when the Cherokees could support their rights by the sword, if necessary. Others were made when the Cherokees were weak and without the means of defense. All, however, acknowledge to their fullest extent the rights of the Cherokees and concede to them exclusive sovereignty over the territory the Cherokees occupy.
We are denationalized; we are disfranchised. We are deprived of membership in the human family! We have neither land nor home, nor resting place that can be called our own. And this is caused by the terms of an agreement which claims to be an official treaty. We are overwhelmed! Our hearts are sickened.

The Treaty of New Echota is not the act of our Nation; we did not participate in negotiating it; it has not received the approval of our people. The makers of it hold no office nor appointment in our Nation, under the title of Chiefs, Head men, or any other title, by which they have authority to make bargain and sale of our rights, our possessions, and our common country. And therefore we appeal with confidence to the justice, the generosity, the compassion of your government against the enforcement of the terms of an agreement that we had no role in making.

In truth, our cause is your own; it is the cause of liberty and of justice. It is based upon your own principles, which we have learned from yourselves; for we are proud to count your George Washington and your Thomas Jefferson as our great teachers. We have read their communications to us with great respect; we have practiced their ideas with success. And the result is clear. The wilderness of the forest has given way to comfortable houses and cultivated fields.

On your kindness, on your humanity, on your compassion, on your benevolence, we rest our hopes. To you we address our prayers: spare our people!