

ANDREW JACKSON'S CASE TO CONGRESS FOR THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT

PRIMARY SOURCE

The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual States, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it Promises to the Government are the least of its recommendations. It puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the General and State Governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid. It will relieve the whole State of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those States to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power. It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the States; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the Government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community. These consequences, some of them so certain and the rest so probable, make the complete execution of the plan sanctioned by Congress at their last session an object of much solicitude.

“MEMORIAL OF THE CHEROKEE NATION”

We are aware that some persons suppose it will be for our advantage to remove beyond the Mississippi. We think otherwise. Our people universally think otherwise. We wish to remain on the land of our fathers. We have a perfect and original right to remain without interruption. The treaties and laws made in the United States guarantee our residence, privileges and secure us against these intruders.

If we are forced to leave our country, we see nothing but ruin before us. The territory you intend to force us to be assigned is badly supplied with wood and water; and no Indian tribe can live without these articles. The land to which we are urged is not the land of our birth, nor our affections. It contains neither the scenes of our childhood, nor the graves of our fathers. We have been called ignorant and degraded, yet there is no man so ignorant not to know that he has the right to live on the land of his fathers. Nor is there a man so degraded as not to feel the sense of injury, on being deprived of his rights and driven into exile.

*adapted from “Memorial of
the Cherokee Nation” (1830)*