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**President Andrew Jackson's Message to Congress "On Indian Removal" (1830)**

It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of the Government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching to a happy consummation. Two important tribes have accepted the provision made for their removal at the last session of Congress, and it is believed that their example will induce the remaining tribes also to seek the same obvious advantages.

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.

What good man would prefer a country covered with forests and ranged by a few thousand savages to our extensive Republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms embellished with all the improvements which art can devise or industry execute, occupied by more than 12,000,000 happy people, and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization and religion?

The present policy of the Government is but a continuation of the same progressive change by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern States were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to land where their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual. Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions. Does Humanity weep at these painful separations from everything, animate and inanimate, with which the young heart has become entwined? Far from it. It is rather a source of joy that our country affords scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body or in mind, developing the power and facilities of man in their highest perfection. These remove hundreds and almost thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. Can it be cruel in this Government when, by events which it can not control, the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions! If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy.

And is it supposed that the wandering savage has a stronger attachment to his home than the settled, civilized Christian? Is it more afflicting to him to leave the graves of his fathers than it is to our brothers and children? Rightly considered, the policy of the General Government toward the red man is not only liberal, but generous. He is unwilling to submit to the laws of the States and mingle with their population. To save him from this alternative, or perhaps utter annihilation, the General Government kindly offers him a new home, and proposes to pay the whole expense of his removal and settlement.

**Significance**

During Jackson's presidency the United States acquired about 100 million acres of eastern Indian land. Nearly 46,000 Native Americans immigrated to the West. Only about 9,000 Indians—mostly in New York and the Great Lakes—were not covered by treaties calling for their removal. These Indians were fortunate, since removal did not proceed as smoothly as Congress and Jackson had expected.

Not all Indians abandoned their ancestral lands quietly to venture into the unknown West. In 1832, in western Illinois, Black Hawk, a leader of the Sauk and Fox Indians, led a revolt. Militias attacked and chased the Indians into southern Wisconsin. After a deadly battle, Black Hawk was captured and about 400 of his people were massacred. In the South, the powerful Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Cherokee tribes refused to relocate. The Cherokee responded with a unique legal challenge: They appealed to the Supreme Court and won. In 1832, the Court under John Marshall ruled that the Cherokee were a distinct political community that occupied its own territory. An angry Jackson ignored the Court's decision and pushed for the removal of his "red children." Under armed guard, in 1838 the Cherokees embarked on a 1,200-mile journey now known as the Trail of Tears. Nearly a quarter of the Cherokee died on the journey. Survivors joined 15,000 Creek, 12,000 Choctaw, 5,000 Chickasaw, and several thousand Seminoles who had already been forcibly removed to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Meanwhile, a second Seminole War broke out in 1836 as Indians in Florida took up arms against relocation.

When he left the presidency in 1837, Jackson used his farewell address to profess his belief in the benefits of Indian removal. Jackson sincerely believed that exile to the West was necessary to save Indian culture. But the costs of forced relocation were very high. To this day, Indians condemn Jackson for actions that killed their ancestors.

**Questions.**

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