

Andrew Jackson to Robert Butler, June 21, 1817, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO COLONEL ROBERT BUTLER.

Cherokee Agency, June 21, 1817.

D'r Colo. I reached this place on the 18th having got to Highwassee Garrison on the 17th where I learned that Colo. Meiggs had notified the chiefs to meet here believing public good would result from the change.

Yesterday being the day appointed, none but the chiefs and delegation from the arkansaw attended.¹ These appear verry solicitous for an exchange, in fact I believe every native of the nation left to themselves, would freely make this election. But they appear to be overawed by the council of some whitemen and half breeds, who have been and are fattening upon the annuities, the labours, and folly of the native Indian, and who believe, that their income would be destroyed by the removal of the Indians. These that I have named are like some of our bawling politicians, who loudly exclaim we are the friends of the people, but who, when the[y] obtain their views care no more for the happiness or welfare of the people than the Devil does—but each procure influence through the same channell and for the same base purpose, *self agrandisement*.

¹ When the three commissioners met at the Cherokee Agency, June 20, only representatives of the Arkansas Cherokees were there. It was ten days before enough of the eastern chieftains could be assembled to begin business. Then Jackson, speaking for the commissioners, presented their demands. In 1809, he said, the Cherokees had agreed to exchange lands in the East for lands to which they would go in Arkansas.

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Under this agreement a large number had migrated, estimated now at about 3700. No lands had been surrendered by the nation to offset the lands ceded to the portion of the nation, and he demanded that the compensatory cession be made. To those Indians who elected to stay in the East he could give no other promise than that they should be content with a square mile of land for each head of a family and with citizenship. As early as this Jackson had formed his opposition to allowing an Indian tribal government to exist with immunity within the bounds of a state in the Union. For his demands see his talk with the Cherokees, June 28, 1817, Jackson MSS., and Rachael Caroline Eaton, *John Ross and the Cherokee Indians*, p. 30, n. 20.

Genl Meryweather is with me, and it becomes our duty to endeavour to counteract this policy and clearly explain, the true interests of the natives and I am of the opinion, that at least one half of the nation will relinquish their right here and go to the Arkansaw, perhaps the whole with very few exceptions, for as soon as the native says he will go, few of the whitemen or half breeds can live under civilized laws, and will follow.