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“A PERPETUAL HARROW UPON MY FEELINGS”: JOHN QUINCY ADAMS AND THE AMERICAN INDIAN

LYNN HUDSON PARSONS

THE year 1841 saw the Whig party in control of both houses of the United States Congress for the first—and, as it turned out, the only—time. The Whig takeover insured that all Congressional committee chairmanships could go to loyal party members. A few eyebrows were raised when it was announced that John Quincy Adams, a maverick Whig at best, had been appointed Chairman of the House Committee on Indian Affairs. But more eyebrows were raised a few days later when Adams rejected the appointment. Some of his colleagues attempted to extract from him the reasons for his unusual action, but were shouted down.¹ As is so often the case with an Adams, his diary reveals the private reason behind the public act. On June 30, 1841, he wrote of his appointment, “I was excused from that service at my own request, from a full conviction that its only result would be to keep a perpetual harrow upon my feelings, with a total impotence to render any useful service.” Of United States Indian policy, he added, “It is among the heinous sins of this nation, for which I believe God will one

¹ *Congressional Globe*, x, 37 (June 18, 1841), 72 (June 25, 1841). The author wishes to thank the Research Foundation of the State University of New York for assistance in the preparation of this essay.

day bring them to judgement—but at His own time and by His own means. I turned my eyes away from this sickening mass of putrefaction. . . .”²

Such an outburst is remarkable in itself, but even more remarkable when it is compared with Adams’ earlier career, which saw him professing quite dissimilar views. In the waning weeks of the War of 1812, Adams was by far the most insistent of the American representatives at Ghent, claiming the extinction of all Indian rights a national duty. “I had till I came here,” wrote Henry Goulburn, a member of the British negotiating team, after conversations with Adams, “no idea of the fixed determination which prevails in the breast of every American to extirpate the Indians and appropriate their territory; but I am now sure that there is nothing which the people of America would so reluctantly abandon as what they are pleased to call their natural right to do so.”³ Four years later, as Secretary of State, Adams defended not only Andrew Jackson’s invasion of Spanish Florida, but also his execution of certain Indian prisoners without trial. “It is thus only,” he wrote in a widely publicized diplomatic dispatch, “that the barbarities of the Indians can successfully be encountered.”⁴

It must be said that as of 1814, the views of John Quincy Adams and those of Andrew Jackson regarding Indians differed very little. Obviously, there is a problem in accounting for the Adams of 1841 who regarded United States Indian policy as “among the heinous sins of this nation.” It would be

² John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 12 vols. C. F. Adams editor (Philadelphia, 1874-1877), x, 491-492 (June 30, 1841).

³ Goulburn to Earl Bathurst, Nov. 25, 1814, quoted in Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, *Supplementary Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda*, 15 vols. (London, 1858-1872), ix, 452, 454. For the background to this statement see Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1949), 200-208, George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (London, 1953), 64-70, and Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams* (Berkeley, Cal., 1964), 68-101.

⁴ Adams to George William Erving, Nov. 28, 1818, John Quincy Adams, *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, 7 vols., W. C. Ford, editor (New York, 1913-1917), vi, 498-499. See also Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 137-138; Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 315-316; Marquis James, *Andrew Jackson: The Border Captain* (New York, 1933), 318-320.

tempting to explain this reversal in terms of Adams' resentment against Jackson himself, for it was certain that the guiding spirit behind federal Indian policy from 1829 was the same man who had defeated Adams for reelection to the presidency. For Adams and his heirs, Jackson became the symbol for the decline of the Republic of the Founding Fathers, the catalyst that precipitated the forces of demagoguery, hypocrisy, and greed which were to characterize so much of nineteenth-century America.⁵ Yet the Congressman from the Plymouth District did not hesitate to support Jackson when he thought he was right, as on the Nullification issue in 1833 and the confrontation with France over the spoliation claims in 1835-1836. (The latter stand probably cost Adams a seat in the Senate).⁶ Neither partisanship nor personalities had much to do with Adams' views on the American Indian or on any other public question.

In many respects, Adams remained consistent in his attitude toward the red man in America. At no time did he doubt the superiority of white Christian civilization over that of the pagan Indian. At no time did he question seriously the right of the European settler in the New World. But within the range of these views held by nearly all white Americans of his time, John Quincy Adams progressed in the course of his career from an attitude of hostility, to one of curiosity, and from mere curiosity he moved to the sense of outrage indicated by his denunciation of 1841. This essay will explore Adams' changing attitude toward the aboriginal Americans within the context of the events of his diplomatic, presidential, and congressional careers. It will also try to shed some additional light upon the role the American Indian played in the emergence of the Democratic and Whig parties of the 1830's. Although additional work needs to be done, it would appear that the question

⁵ See Brooks Adams' introduction to Henry Adams, *The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma* (New York, 1969), 27-28, 77-86.

⁶ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York, 1956), 263-269, 305-325. On Adams' rejection of partisanship, see his letter to Nicholas Biddle, June 10, 1836, quoted in Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Emancipation Under Martial Law (1819-1842)* (Cambridge, 1902), 88-89.

of Indian removal has been obscured and ignored here, as in so many other areas. The focus, however, will remain on John Quincy Adams and the way in which the American Indian came to affect his perception of his fellow countrymen and that of the future of the United States.

I

On December 22, 1802, the anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims, the citizens of Plymouth, Massachusetts, invited John Quincy Adams—formerly a successful diplomat but at that time a none too successful Boston attorney—to deliver an oration suitable to the occasion.⁷ As was to be expected, the discourse proved to be full of self-indulgent praise for the Fathers of the Plymouth Colony and of New England generally. Noting a fact that would be seized upon by many later historians, Adams congratulated his listeners, who, unlike the corrupt Europeans, were able to trace their origins within recorded memory, rather than back to a shadowy antiquity:

The founders of your race are not handed down to you, like the father of the Roman people, as the sucklings of a wolf. . . . The great actors of the day we now solemnize were illustrious by their intrepid valor, no less than by their christian graces; but the clarion of conquest has not blazon'd forth their names to all the winds of Heaven. Their glory has not been wafted over oceans of blood to the remotest regions of the earth. They have not erected to themselves, colossal statues upon pedestals of human bones, to provoke and insult the tardy hand of heavenly retribution.⁸

Such a roseate view required, among other things, an explanation of the Pilgrims' right to settle upon land previously inhabited by the native Americans, a task to which Adams devoted some time. Historically the issue had been largely resolved by the devastation of the Indian tribes by plague, but Adams was interested in propounding a more acceptable ra-

⁷ Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 113.

⁸ John Quincy Adams, *An Oration, Delivered at Plymouth, December 22, 1802, at the Anniversary Commemoration of the First Landing of Our Ancestors* (Boston, 1802), 8-9.

tionalization.⁹ That the Fathers of Plymouth had in fact purchased their original settlement did not really resolve the issue, for many who came later had not. In the background lay the more momentous question of the right of the European to intrude upon America in the first place.¹⁰

Noting that those whom he styled "moralists" and "philanthropists" had raised the issue, Adams defended the rights of the European through arguments already used by such authorities as Vattel and Locke, namely, that intensive agrarian communities have stronger claims to the same land than do extensive hunting or nomadic groups. The Indians, far less numerous than the Europeans, had no right to stand in the way of the white man, who would use the land to sustain several times the number of human beings:

What is the right of a huntsman to the forest of a thousand miles over which he has accidentally ranged in quest of prey? . . . Shall the fields and the vallies, which a beneficent God has formed to teem with the life of innumerable multitudes, be condemned to everlasting barrenness? Shall the mighty rivers poured out by the hands of nature, as channels of communication between numerous nations, roll their waters in sullen silence and eternal solitude to the deep? Have hundreds of commodious harbours, a thousand leagues of coast, and a boundless ocean been spread in the front of this land, and shall every purpose of utility to which they could apply be prohibited by the tenant of the woods? No, generous philanthropists! Heaven has not been thus inconsistent in the works of its hands!¹¹

There would come a time when the Plymouth Oration would be used in support of programs and policies which he abhorred, but Adams never repudiated nor questioned the

⁹ Alden T. Vaughan, *The New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675* (Boston, 1965), 21-22.

¹⁰ For an introduction to the literature on this subject, see Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny* (Baltimore, 1935), Chapter III, and Wilcomb E. Washburn, "The Moral and Legal Justifications for Dispossessing The Indians" in James Morton Smith, editor, *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1959), 15-32.

¹¹ Adams, *An Oration . . . at Plymouth*, 22-25.

fundamental right of the European to settle in America.¹² If anything, his views on this matter were strengthened over the next eighteen years. As he himself remarked in 1824, the arguments of the Plymouth Oration proved of great assistance against British attempts in 1814 to negotiate the creation of an independent Indian state in the upper Ohio River valley.¹³ Adams, writing from Ghent where he, Albert Gallatin, James Bayard, Henry Clay, and Jonathan Russell were attempting to conclude a treaty ending the War of 1812, saw the basis for the British Indian proposal as “no other than a profound and rankling jealousy at the rapid increase of population and of settlements in the United States, [and] an impotent longing to thwart their progress and to stunt their growth.”¹⁴

His diary and correspondence indicate that Adams was prepared to go further than any of his colleagues in asserting white power over the natives, as well as proclaiming the inevitable expansion of Anglo-Saxon civilization. In his proposed draft of an American reply to the British Indian proposal he reiterated the Plymouth arguments:

It cannot be unknown to the British government that the principal if not the only value of lands to the Indian state of society is their property as hunting grounds. That in the unavoidable, and surely not to be regretted, progress of a population increasing with unexampled rapidity, and of the civilized settlements consequent upon it, the mere approximation of cultivated fields, of villages and of cities, necessarily diminishes and by degrees annihilates the only quality of the adjoining deserts, which makes them subject of Indian occupancy.¹⁵

¹² Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 205 (March 22, 1830).

¹³ Adams, *Writings*, III, 10-11. For a later statement of the same theme, though without any references to the American Indian, see Adams “The Progress of Society from Hunter State to that of Civilization,” *American Whig Review*, II, 80-89 (1845). For an amusing commentary on the latter essay, see Wendell Glick, “The Best Possible World of John Quincy Adams,” *NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY*, XXXVII, 3-17 (1964). See also Adams’ lecture, *The New England Confederacy of MDCXLIII* (Boston, 1843), 12-15.

¹⁴ Adams to James Monroe, Sept. 5, 1814, *Writings*, V, 119-120.

¹⁵ Adams, Draft of reply to British Commissioners, Aug. 21, 1814, *Writings*, V, 96.

Therefore, concluded Adams, it was in the Indian's own best interests to make way for the white man, and to sell the lands which the latter's encroachments had made worthless. Any idea of an independent Indian state was not only contrary to the interests of all concerned, but in defiance of the flow of history. Even if Great Britain were successful in extracting "a concession so pernicious and degrading" from the Americans,

Can she believe that the swarming myriads of her own children, in the process of converting the western wilderness to a powerful empire, could be long cramped or arrested by a treaty stipulation confining whole regions of territory to a few scattered hordes of savages, whose numbers to the end of ages would not amount to the population of one considerable city?¹⁶

Much to Adams' disgust, his proposed reply was lukewarmly received by his colleagues. "It was considered by all the gentlemen that what I had written was too long, and with too much argument about the Indians." A few days later Adams noted that almost all he had written on the Indian matter had been struck out of the final draft, though whether this was because Gallatin and the others disagreed with Adams' presentation or because they thought his arguments unnecessary is unclear.¹⁷

Not content with leaving matters at this point, Adams sought out Henry Goulburn, one of the British commissioners, in order to underscore his own personal views. He pointed out that it was American policy to respect the possessions of the Indian tribes, who, like the Cherokees, had adopted agricultural ways. "But," Adams went on, "the greater part of the Indians could never be prevailed upon to adopt this mode of life. . . . It was impossible for such people ever to be said to have possessions." He defended the United States policy of purchase and removal, insisting it was better than the theft and extermination which he alleged that other nations had practiced. He concluded with a baleful warning. "If Great Britain meant to preclude forever the people of the United States from settling and cultivating

¹⁶ Adams, *Writings*, v, 98-99.

¹⁷ Adams, *Memoirs*, III, 21-23 (Aug. 21, 23, 1814).

those territories, she must not think of doing it by a treaty. She must formally undertake, and accomplish, their utter extermination."¹⁸

Goulburn was not impressed. He wrote to his superior in London that so far as his contacts with the Americans were concerned, "all that I think I have learnt from them is this: that Mr. Adams is a very bad arguer."¹⁹ A few weeks later, Adams was still demanding a more militant stance on the Indian question. He proposed that his colleagues insist on "the moral and religious duty of the American nation to cultivate their territory, though to the necessary extinction of all the rights of savage tribes, by fair and amicable means." Gallatin and the others were willing to acknowledge this "duty," but circumspectly preferred to leave God and morality out of it.²⁰ Even after the British abandoned the demand for an independent Indian state, Adams opposed any settlement of the War of 1812 which did not explicitly recognize total white American control over the natives. He told his wife that he would have been prepared to break off negotiations over the issue, but his colleagues prevailed upon him to relent.²¹ In 1814 the American Indian was, to Adams, anything but "a perpetual harrow" upon his feelings.

Nor had matters changed by 1818, the year of the furor over Andrew Jackson's war against the Seminoles in Spanish Florida. As President Monroe's Secretary of State, Adams again saw himself carrying the same burden he had carried at Ghent, and once more he was alone among his associates in the President's cabinet, most of whom desired disciplinary action against Jackson.²² Adams' view, which eventually prevailed, was that the

¹⁸ Adams, *Memoirs*, III, 27-29 (Sept. 1, 1814).

¹⁹ Goulburn to Earl Bathurst, Sept. 2, 1814. Wellington, *Supplementary Despatches*, IX, 217.

²⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, III, 39-42 (Sept. 23, 25, 1814); Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 207-208; Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, 76.

²¹ Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Oct. 14, 1814, *Writings*, v, 158; Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams*, 88-91.

²² Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 137-138; Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 315-316; James, *The Border Captain*, 318-320.

General's apparent violation of his orders and his execution of prisoners without trial should not be allowed to obscure the fact that European powers—in this case Spain and possibly Britain—were using the Seminoles and their runaway slave allies to threaten the security of the United States, and all other matters should be subordinated to that consideration.²³

Adams was well aware of the weaknesses of Jackson's—and his own—case. He noted that the General's actions toward the Indian prisoners were “without due regard to humanity,” and that he himself was “not prepared for such a mode of warfare.”²⁴ Nor was there any doubt of Jackson's violation of orders not to attack or occupy Spanish forts. Whether Adams was also aware that the war was the result of white attempts to deny sanctuary to escaped Georgia slaves, as demonstrated many years later by William Jay and Joshua Giddings, may be doubted.²⁵ In any event, Adams' official defense of the Seminole War to the Spanish and British ministers was a model of its kind, illustrating, as George Dangerfield put it, the principle that “when one's position is morally unsound it is better to attack than to defend.”²⁶ Placing the blame for the affair on Spanish inability or unwillingness to control the Seminoles and the “banditti of negroes” who were their allies, Adams presented a highly inaccurate picture of the events which led to Jackson's invasion of Florida. He concentrated on the “barbarous, unrelenting, and exterminating character of Indian hostilities,” and even concealed—or abandoned—his reservations over the execution of the Indian prisoners. “Contending with such enemies,” he told the American Minister at Madrid, “although humanity revolts at entire retaliation upon them . . . yet mercy

²³ Adams, *Memoirs*, IV, 107-114 (July 15-21, 1818).

²⁴ Adams, *Memoirs*, IV, 87 (May 4, 1818).

²⁵ William Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery* (New York, 1853), 247-249; Joshua Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida* (Gainesville, Fla., 1964), 35-56; Edwin C. McReynolds, *The Seminoles* (Norman, Okla., 1957), 73-80. Neither Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 313, nor Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 125, mention the proslavery origins of the first Seminole War.

²⁶ Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 148; Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 325-327.

herself surrenders to retributive justice the lives of their leading warriors taken in arms. . . .”²⁷ In a more restrained mood, Adams later told Gallatin, at that time American Minister in Paris, that the deterrent effects of the invasion “will be the greatest benefit ever conferred by a white man upon their tribes, since it will be the only possible means of redeeming them from the alternative otherwise unavoidable of their utter extermination.”²⁸

In later years, when the temptation must have been very great, Adams never wavered from his earlier support of the Seminole War and of Andrew Jackson. In early 1830, perhaps the lowest psychological point of Adams’ life, a pamphlet appeared which attacked both Adams and Jackson over the Seminole affair, and suggested that Adams’ defeat for reelection as President in 1828 by the very man he had defended was a form of divine punishment—an idea especially wounding to Adams. Written by the Virginian Benjamin Watkins Leigh, the pamphlet also demonstrated that Adams had played fast and loose with certain passages from Vattel which he used to justify the execution of the Indians.²⁹ Adams dismissed Leigh’s contentions as “lawyer’s arguments.” “Scruples of law and constitution with such enemies,” he continued, “are like the scruples of the Jews butchered by their enemies rather than violate the Sabbath by self-defense.” To his son, Adams melodramatically proclaimed that “were it to go over again, I would do the same, should the retribution reserved for me, instead of that which I endure, be crucifixion.”³⁰

²⁷ Adams to Don Luis de Onis, July 23, 1818, and to George William Erving, Nov. 28, 1818, *Writings*, vi, 386-394, 498-499.

²⁸ Adams to Gallatin, Nov. 30, 1818, *Writings*, vi, 513.

²⁹ “Algernon Sydney” [Benjamin Watkins Leigh], *The Letters of Algernon Sydney in Defense of Civil Liberty and Against the Encroachments of Military Despotism* (Richmond, Va., 1830), viii, 22-26. These letters originally appeared in the *Richmond Enquirer* in 1818 and 1819. See Adams to his father, John Adams, Feb. 14, 1819, *Writings*, vi, 528-532.

³⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, viii, 223 (April 29, 1830); Adams to Charles Francis Adams, April 28, 1830, Adams Family Manuscript Trust, Microfilm Reel 150. Hereafter cited as Adams MSS Trust, with reel number.

Adams never abandoned the view that since the Seminoles in 1818 were covertly supported by the Spanish and possibly the British, military action against them was justified by the principle of self-defense.³¹ But after 1818, thanks to the combination of Jackson's exploits and Adams' diplomacy, the situation changed. For differing reasons, both Spain and Great Britain no longer were obstacles to American security or expansion. The United States acquired Florida, and Spain renounced any interests north of the Adams-Onís Treaty Line of 1819.³² It was clear that Spain was a crumbling power. As for the British, their new-found interest in manufacturing for a world market led to a "diplomacy of coal and iron" and the abandoning of their hostile attitude toward American expansion.³³ Under such conditions, the dwindling number of Indians who menaced the borders of the United States could scarcely be seen as either the obstacle or the threat to the progress of Anglo-Saxon civilization that Adams had once proclaimed them to be. Not surprisingly then, the years following 1820 saw nearly all of Adams' earlier hostility toward the Indian disappear.

At about the same time, the other main support for Adams' anti-Indian prejudice was also weakening. The simplistic dichotomy between the Euro-American's agrarian culture and the native American's hunting and nomadic civilization, whatever basis in fact it may have had in the days of Vattel and Locke, was inaccurate as regarded most of the Indians east of the Mississippi in the early nineteenth century. Not only the "Five Civilized Tribes" of the South (Cherokees, Creeks, Chocktaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles) but the tribes composing the Iroquois Nation in the North, as well as most other remaining

³¹ Adams to William H. Crawford, July 30, 1830, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 150.

³² Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 329-340; Philip C. Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands: the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819* (Berkeley, Cal., 1939); C. C. Griffin, "The U. S. and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire," *Columbia University Studies*, No. 429 (New York, 1937).

³³ Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 283-292; Bemis, *Adams and American Foreign Policy*, 293-299.

tribes in the East, had developed agrarian ways, either because they wished to, or because they thought it strategically wise.³⁴ Although the pursuit of game was still a large part of their existence, this was true also of the white frontiersman. A close look at Indian society east of the Mississippi would have seriously undermined the standard white argument against Indian rights to the land. Needless to say, few whites were willing to take that look.

Adams' first recorded contact with Indians had been in 1794, when on the eve of his departure as American minister to the Netherlands, President Washington invited Adams to witness a ceremonial session with a group of Chickasaw chiefs. The twenty-seven-year-old Adams was not impressed. Their speech, he reported, "more than once reminded me of the Houynhms [sic]." He also noted that the Chickasaws seemed puzzled at Washington's insistence on smoking the peace pipe with them, and "from their manner of going through with it, looked as if they were submitting to a process in compliance with *our* custom."³⁵

As Secretary of State from 1817 to 1825, Adams had little direct responsibility for Indian affairs, since this was the domain of the War Department and its able Secretary, John C. Calhoun. But as a member of the President's cabinet, he had the opportunity to observe delegations of Indians from time to time, and what he saw rarely fitted the stereotypes of Plymouth and Ghent. Not long after his arrival in Washington in 1817, Adams witnessed a meeting between President Monroe and a delegation of "northern" Indians—Senecas, Wyandots, and Delawares. He noted approvingly that "they said they had all become cultivators of the land, and had altogether abandoned the life of huntsmen."³⁶ Adams was even more enthusiastic after meeting with some Cherokees in 1824. Not only were they farmers, but they "were dressed entirely according to our man-

³⁴ See Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, Chapter III; Washburn, "The Moral and Legal Justification for Dispossessing the Indians," cited above; Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America* (Baltimore, 1965), 66-73, 123.

³⁵ Adams, *Memoirs*, I, 34-36 (July 11, 1794).

³⁶ Adams, *Memoirs*, IV, 20 (Nov. 10, 1817).

ner. Two of them spoke English with good pronunciation, and one with grammatical accuracy. . . . They gave me some account of their institutions, which are incipient.”³⁷ Five months later, Adams added

The manners and deportment of these men have in no respect differed from those of well-bred country gentlemen. They have frequented all the societies, where they have been invited at evening parties, attended several drawing-rooms, and most of Mrs. Adams’s Tuesday evenings. They dress like ourselves, except that Hicks, a young and very handsome man, wore habitually a purfled scarf. . . .³⁸

Yet Adams still distinguished between “savage” and “civilized” Indians, as is shown by a different account, given at about the same time, of a meeting with some “Plains Indians”—Sauks, Fox, Iowa, Menomonee, Chippewa, and Sioux. These, he said, were “among the most savage of the desert,” and some of them “all but naked.”³⁹ At no time could Adams be said to have accepted the notion of the “Noble Savage.”

Many years later, when he was attracting attention as a friend of the Indians, he still maintained that what “civilization” they had acquired was a result of contact with whites. Before the arrival of the European, he wrote in 1837, they were “Savages and Idolators.”⁴⁰ But there was no gainsaying the fact that many of the Indians under pressure from the whites in the nineteenth century were not “Savages and Idolators.” This was a result not only of their proximity to white men, but of the efforts of several generations of white missionaries. The new circumstances were reflected in Adams’ changed attitude toward Indian claims in the 1820’s, both as Secretary of State and President.

II

The roots of the major Indian controversies of the 1820’s were sunk deep in the Jeffersonian past. By an agreement with

³⁷ Adams, *Memoirs*, vi, 229 (Jan. 8, 1824).

³⁸ Adams, *Memoirs*, vi, 373 (June 3, 1824).

³⁹ Adams, *Memoirs*, vi, 402, 406 (July 31, Aug. 4, 1824).

⁴⁰ Adams to Sherlock S. Gregory, Nov. 23, 1837. Adams MSS Trust, Reel 153.

Georgia in 1802, the federal government had pledged to extinguish by peaceful and reasonable means the rights of all Indians in that state, but had since failed to do so, primarily because of the refusal of the Creeks and Cherokees to leave their ancestral lands.⁴¹ When the subject first arose in Monroe's cabinet, Adams, still functioning in the charged atmosphere of the Seminole War, disagreed with the more conciliatory Calhoun, and urged the President to accommodate the increasingly insistent Georgians by persuading the Indians to emigrate westward.⁴² But his contacts with the Cherokees and Creeks, the removal of the danger of foreign intrigue with the Indians, and the entire affair's implications for federal-state relations, all caused Adams to reverse himself by 1824 and for the first time to take the side of the Indian against the white man, at least in the privacy of Monroe's cabinet.

As the Georgia governor and legislature became more and more threatening in their insistence upon the removal of the Creeks and Cherokees, Monroe was inclined to throw the matter into the lap of Congress. Adams (supported by Calhoun, who was in trouble with the Georgia Congressional delegation because he had inadvertently addressed the Cherokee leaders as "gentlemen") objected. If Congress were to be invited to resolve the issue, it at least should be reminded that the agreement of 1802 called for a peaceful solution. "The Indians," said Adams, "had perfect right on their side in refusing to remove."⁴³ Monroe proceeded to revise his message to Congress to include the reminder urged by Adams and Calhoun.⁴⁴ When

⁴¹ Ulrich B. Phillips, *Georgia and States' Rights* (Washington, 1902), 39-65; Annie H. Abel, *History of Events Resulting in Indian Consolidation West of the Mississippi River* (Washington, 1908), 322-326; Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy* (Cambridge, 1962), 227-233. See also Reginald Horsman, "American Indian Policy in the Old Northwest," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, xviii, 35-53 (1961).

⁴² Adams, *Memoirs*, v, 21-22 (March 13, 1820). As late as July, 1820, Adams supported the appointment of Andrew Jackson as a federal commissioner to negotiate with the Indians. See his letter to Governor Clark of Georgia, July 24, 1820, in *Writings*, vii, 54-56.

⁴³ Adams, *Memoirs*, vi, 267-268, 271-272 (March 26, 29, 1824).

⁴⁴ Monroe to Congress, March 30, 1824, James D. Richardson, editor, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 10 vols. (Washington, 1899), ii, 234-237.

Georgia continued to threaten to remove the Indians on her own authority, Adams recorded the prophetic conviction that “this bursting forth of Georgia upon the Government of the United States was ominous of other events.”⁴⁵

By 1825, when Adams became President, the Georgia controversy was reaching the boiling point. By that time the states-rights aspect of the affair gave the fate of the Indians national significance. For John Quincy Adams, whose constitutional nationalism was more thoroughgoing than that of any other nineteenth-century President, the fact that the integrity of the federal government now was closely tied to the protection of the Indians—and *vice versa*—could not help affecting his views. Even before he took the oath of office, Adams was headed on a collision course with two of the more basic precepts of “Jacksonian democracy”—the rights of the states over the federal government, and the rights of white men over Indians.

On February 12, 1825, three days after the House of Representatives selected Adams as President over Andrew Jackson and William Crawford, a treaty was concluded between commissioners of the federal government and certain chiefs of the Georgia Creeks.⁴⁶ This “Treaty of Indian Springs” provided for the voluntary removal of the entire Creek nation from Georgia, and liberal *douceurs* for those Creek leaders who had signed the document—a standard feature of such agreements. Since the treaty was approved by the Senate on March 3, 1825, less than twenty-four hours before Adams was to take office, it became virtually the first order of business of the new administration. Having been duly negotiated by authorized federal commissioners, approved by two-thirds of the Senate, and offering the possible resolution of a particularly volatile issue, Adams proceeded to ratify it. Two months later he learned that the two federal commissioners had worked in collusion with certain Georgia officials, that those Creeks who signed

⁴⁵ Adams, *Memoirs*, vi, 255-256 (March 12, 1824).

⁴⁶ The details of the Georgia-Creek controversy can be found in Phillips, *Georgia and States' Rights*, 15-66; Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 335-346; and Bemis, *Adams and the Union*, 79-87.

the treaty were unrepresentative of the nation, that their leader, a half-breed named McIntosh, was a distant relative of the governor of Georgia, and that in reprisal for negotiating the treaty, McIntosh had later been slain by his fellow Creeks.⁴⁷

The majority Creek faction rejected the Treaty of Indian Springs and refused to leave their lands. This rejection, Adams told Congress the following year, released the government from the terms of the treaty. There were two options open: the government could forcibly eject the Creeks from their land, or it could attempt to negotiate a new treaty to obtain the same result peacefully and in accord with the agreement of 1802. "The preference dictated by the nature of our institutions and by the sentiments of justice" required the government to seek the second solution.⁴⁸ The Secretary of War, James Barbour of Virginia, accordingly produced a second treaty providing for the peaceful removal of the Creeks from all but a small portion of Georgia.⁴⁹

The Governor of Georgia, George McIntosh Troup, stood by the original treaty, insisting upon its validity. He announced that land surveys would proceed regardless of what the federal government did. Troup's surveyors entered Creek and Cherokee territory in the summer of 1826 and complained loudly of Indian treachery when they met resistance. On February 5, 1827, Adams placed the matter before Congress, asserting that the actions of Georgia were "in direct violation of the supreme law of this land, set forth in a treaty which has received all the sanctions provided for by the Constitution which we have been sworn to support and maintain."⁵⁰ But by this time, Adams' presidency was entangled in the thicket of par-

⁴⁷ Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 3-11 (May 15-20, 1825).

⁴⁸ Adams, First Annual Message, Dec. 6, 1825, Richardson, *Messages*, II, 306; Adams to Senate, Jan. 31, 1826, and April 25, 1826, *Messages*, II, 324-326, 345.

⁴⁹ Richard J. Hryniewicki, "The Creek Treaty of Washington, 1826," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XLVIII, 425-441 (1964). Also, Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 61-62 (Nov. 26, 1825). The progress of negotiations with the Creeks is touched upon intermittently in Adams' diary from 1825 to 1827.

⁵⁰ Adams to Senate, Feb. 5, 1827, Richardson, *Messages*, II, 370-373; Bemis, *Adams and the Union*, 85-87; Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 349-355.

tianship which would ultimately bring it down, and Congress showed no disposition to remedy matters. Governor Troup threatened resistance should federal force be used on behalf of the Indians. Here matters stood until later in the same year, when Adams was none too gracefully let off the hook by the conclusion of a third treaty which ceded the remaining portion of Georgia to the whites.⁵¹

Parallel with the Creek controversy was a dispute between Georgia and the Cherokees. The story is well known.⁵² Showing more unity at this time than the Creeks, the Cherokees adamantly refused even to discuss removal. More than any other tribe, they proceeded to confound the standard white arguments for Indian removal. Not only did the Cherokees take up farming, they took up the raising of livestock, the grinding of grain, and the manufacture of textiles. An 1826 census showed them owning 22,000 cattle, 7,600 horses, 46,000 swine, 726 looms, 2,488 spinning wheels, 31 gristmills, 10 sawmills, and 62 blacksmith shops. They had even progressed so far in white "civilization" as to own 1,277 slaves.⁵³ They established an alphabet, printed a newspaper, and, in Anglo-Saxon Lockian style, called a convention and adopted a constitution, which they proclaimed as supreme law for all Cherokees. Under the leadership of John Ross, the remarkable chief who was to lead them through all their tragic vicissitudes until his death in 1866, the Cherokees lobbied in Congress on behalf of their rights for more than twenty years. "They have sustained a written controversy against the Georgia delegation with great advantage," Adams wrote admiringly in 1824.⁵⁴ The Georgians were less enchanted and pressed for Cherokee removal until

⁵¹ Richard J. Hryniewicki, "The Creek Treaty of Nov. 15, 1827," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, LII, 1-15 (1968); Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 370-371 (Dec. 6, 1827).

⁵² Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal* (Norman, Okla., 1953), 229-312; Dale Van Every, *Disinherited: The Lost Birthright of the American Indian* (New York, 1966), 43-74, 198-235; George D. Harmon, *Sixty Years of Indian Affairs* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1941), 192-196; Prucha, *Indian Policy*, 231-249; Grace Steel Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman, Okla., 1963).

⁵³ Van Every, *Disinherited*, 44-45, 74.

⁵⁴ Adams, *Memoirs*, VI, 373 (June 3, 1824).

1838, when they finally attained their goal with the help of President Martin Van Buren and the United States Army.

Behind both the Creek and the Cherokee controversies lay the broader issue of the proper policy to be pursued by the federal government toward all Indians. From the adoption of the Constitution to Monroe's administration, the policy had been primarily assimilationist; it was hoped that as many Indian tribes and individuals as possible could be converted to Anglo-Saxon ways.⁵⁵ But by the early 1820's, this policy was succumbing to the resistance of many Indians who refused to become Anglo-Saxons, and to the resistance of whites who wanted more land, no matter what the Indians did. Perhaps impressed by the intransigence of the Georgians, Monroe, in his last Message to Congress, had suggested peaceful removal and the creation of a federally guaranteed Indian Territory west of the Mississippi as a means of protecting both races.⁵⁶ However, John Quincy Adams' Inaugural Address as well as his diary indicates that he still believed in assimilation. Thus he ignored his predecessor's last-minute switch to removal, and praised the progress the previous administration had made in "alluring the aboriginal hunters of our land to the cultivation of the soil and of the mind."⁵⁷ Adams' Secretary of War, James Barbour, was even more of an assimilationist than his chief.

Apart from its effect upon the Indians themselves, the most serious practical defect in the assimilationist approach was the fact that most frontier politicians were dead set against it. As Adams and Barbour eventually came to realize, what was wanted was not the conversion of the native to the white man's ways; what was wanted was the native's land, nothing more, nothing less. Assimilation could result in such embarrassments as the Cherokee constitution, which, if it had been successful, would have deprived white land speculators of several hundred thousand acres of land. There was also the pessimistic belief of

⁵⁵ Prucha, *Indian Policy*, 213-224; Horsman, "Indian Policy in the Old Northwest," 35-53; Harmon, *Sixty Years of Indian Affairs*, 157-166.

⁵⁶ James Monroe, Eighth Annual Message, Dec. 7, 1824, Richardson, *Messages*, II, 261; Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 341.

⁵⁷ Adams, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1825, Richardson, *Messages*, II, 298.

men like Henry Clay—a westerner and Adams' Secretary of State—who doubted the efficacy of assimilation on racial and cultural grounds. As Adams reported late in 1825:

Mr. Clay said he thought . . . that it was impossible to civilize Indians; that there never was a full-blooded Indian who took to civilization. It was not in their nature. He believed they were destined to extinction, and, although he would never use or countenance inhumanity towards them, he did not think them, as a race, worth preserving. He considered them as essentially inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race, which were now taking their place on this continent. They were not an improvable breed, and their disappearance from the human family will be no great loss to the world. In point of fact they were rapidly disappearing, and he did not believe that in fifty years from this time there would be any of them left.

“Governor Barbour was somewhat shocked at these opinions,” noted Adams, adding significantly “for which I fear there is too much foundation.”⁵⁸ Although it is doubtful that Adams accepted the racial notions implicit in Clay's analysis, it is more than probable that he was increasingly pessimistic about the Indian's chances for survival in the face of the land-hungry white man and the impotence of the federal government to do anything about it.⁵⁹

Even Secretary Barbour eventually gave up on assimilation and joined the voluntary removalists out of sympathy for the Indian. His report in 1826 is one of the few official documents of that era which points out the hypocrisy of the prevailing policies toward the Indians:

They have been persuaded to abandon the chase—to locate themselves, and become cultivators of the soil—implements of husbandry and domestic animals have been presented them, and all these things have been done, accompanied with professions of a disinterested solicitude for their happiness. Yielding to these temptations, some of them have reclaimed the forest, planted their orchards, and erected houses, not only for their abode, but for the administration of justice, and for religious worship. And when they have so done,

⁵⁸ Adams, *Memoirs*, vii, 89-90 (Dec. 22, 1825).

⁵⁹ Bemis, *Adams and the Union*, 83-84.

*you send your Agent to tell them they must surrender their country to the white man, and re-commit themselves to some new desert, and substitute as the means of their subsistence the precarious chase for the certainty of cultivation. . . . They see that our professions are insincere—that our promises have been broken; that the happiness of the Indian is a cheap sacrifice to the acquisition of new lands. . . .*⁶⁰

Adams, while admiring Barbour's "benevolence and humanity," remained skeptical about removal. The problem was, he told Isaac McCoy, a Baptist missionary and philanthropist,

We have scarcely given them time to build their wigwams before we are called upon by our own people to drive them out again. My own opinion is that the most benevolent course towards them would be to give them the rights and subject them to the duties of citizens, as part of our own people. But even this the people of the States within which they are situated will not permit.⁶¹

Thus, to Adams both solutions seemed inadmissible. Removal—apart from the basic injustice involved—was only a stopgap policy leading to further aggression. Assimilation, even if feasible, collided with the rapaciousness of the frontier. The hunters, Adams told McCoy, were now "themselves hunted by us like a partridge upon the mountains."⁶² He was now close to the position of the British commissioners in 1814, confronted by the determination of the white American to appropriate the West for his own use regardless of the consequences to the Indians. The whole matter caused him to stay up until midnight one winter's eve in 1827, reading old statutes and presidential messages. "This examination," he wrote, "like many others, leads me deeper and deeper into research, till I am compelled to stay my inquiries for want of time to pursue them."⁶³

⁶⁰ Quoted in Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 366.

⁶¹ Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 113 (Feb. 7, 1826), 119 (July 3, 1826), 410-411 (Jan. 23, 1828).

⁶² Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 410 (Jan. 23, 1828).

⁶³ Adams, *Memoirs*, VII, 231-232 (Feb. 25, 1827). For the problems arising from alleged fraud by white government agents upon the New York Senecas during

In the last weeks of his presidential term, Adams showed signs of acceding to the white demands upon the Indian. In his Annual Message for 1828 he alluded to the Cherokee constitution as one of the “unexpected” results of the “civilizing” policies of the past. The claim of the Cherokees for independent status had set at odds the otherwise consistent principles of national supremacy and Indian rights. From a logical standpoint, Adams was less than enthusiastic. A solution had to be found, he told Congress “which, while it shall do justice to those unfortunate children of nature, may secure to the members of our confederation their rights of sovereignty and of soil.”⁶⁴ He then called attention to the recommendations of his new Secretary of War, Peter B. Porter, whose ideas differed from Barbour’s. Not only did Porter oppose assimilation, he favored the withdrawal of federal support from missionaries in the East and its transferral to the trans-Mississippi West, and provided what one authority has called “a bridge between . . . the voluntary removals of Monroe and Adams and the coercive [removals] of Jackson.”⁶⁵ At about the same time, Adams was advising a group of Winnebagoes who were under white pressure to move that “they had better let us have the land where the land was of no use to them.”⁶⁶ The tenor of Adams’ remarks about Indians during his presidency indicates that his image of the American Indian as a huntsman-nomad was slow to die, that the 1820’s were transitional in his thinking, and that the fruits of that transition had yet to be borne. As for federal Indian policy itself, like so much else in Adams’ presidency, it seemed to be marking time, awaiting the momentous changes which the Jackson era would bring.

Adams’ presidency, see letters from the Seneca Chiefs to Adams, Sept. 27 and Oct. 25, 1826, and March 15, 1827. Adams MSS Trust, Reels 477-479. Also *Memoirs*, VII, 465 (March 7, 1828).

⁶⁴ Adams, Fourth Annual Message, Dec. 2, 1828, Richardson, *Messages*, II, 415-416. See also *Memoirs*, VII, 426-427 (Feb. 8, 1828).

⁶⁵ Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 368-369.

⁶⁶ Adams Diary (unpublished), Nov. 29, 1828, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 39; *Memoirs*, VII, 82 (Dec. 14, 1828).

III

There was no ambivalence in the position of Andrew Jackson on Indian affairs from the moment of his Inaugural Address to the end of his term.⁶⁷ The initial focal point of Jacksonian Indian policy became the Removal Bill of 1830. Although the use of force was not provided for, the bill, when enacted, threw the federal government for the first time in support of total separation rather than assimilation. Regardless of past promises, guarantees, or treaties, all the Indians east of the Mississippi were to be deprived of their lands. Those whites who regarded themselves as sympathetic to the Indians were divided over the issue of removal. The majority opposed it, citing its legal injustice as well as the determined opposition of the Indians themselves. A minority, however, sided with the Jacksonians, claiming that the "corrupting" influence of white civilization made removal desirable from the Indian standpoint as well.⁶⁸ Most removalists stuck doggedly to the hunter-farmer dichotomy in spite of its inapplicability in most instances.⁶⁹

John Quincy Adams did not enter the House of Representatives until December, 1831, and therefore did not have the opportunity to vote against the Removal Bill, which he certainly would have done. During the two-and-a-half-year interim between his presidency and his congressional career, Adams had ample time to reflect on the forces which had destroyed his chances for reelection, among which had certainly been his ambivalent Indian policies.⁷⁰ Secretary Barbour's humanitarian considerations excited only the contempt of the frontier, while the constitutional nationalism of Adams' messages to Congress alienated the entire South. The frontier aspects of Jacksonian "democracy" have been exaggerated, but

⁶⁷ Prucha, *Indian Policy*, 233-240.

⁶⁸ Prucha, *Indian Policy*, 225; Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 377-379.

⁶⁹ Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, Chapter III; Pearce, *Savages of America*, 63-75.

⁷⁰ Robert V. Remini, *The Election of Andrew Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1963), 75-76.

there can be no doubt that those who were interested in the most rapid exploitation of the lands in the West and South had more to gain from Jackson's election than from his defeat. Before those lands could be developed, the Indians had to be removed. Adams was quick to perceive the central role that Jackson's removal policy played in augmenting his political strength. To the ex-President they formed an essential part of the Jacksonian conspiracy to bankrupt the nation of its public lands, dissipate its economic strength, and destroy its political integrity.⁷¹

Adams was shrewd enough to recognize that the victimization of the Indians would add, rather than detract, from Jackson's popularity.⁷² He was convinced in advance of the ultimate passage of the Removal Bill. Early in 1830 he was visited by Edward Everett, one of its leading congressional opponents. "I said there was nothing left for the minority to do but to record the . . . perfidy and tyranny of which the Indians are to be made the victims, and leave the punishment of it to Heaven."⁷³ Two months after delivering this unhelpful advice, but before the actual vote in Congress, Adams saw the Indians as "already sacrificed." On the day of the vote, he wrote to Alexander H. Everett, brother of the Congressman, "I have heard much . . . of a speech of your brother's—but that was perhaps on the Indian Question which is prejudged."⁷⁴ Yet the vote in favor of the bill was close, 102 to 97. The pattern of opposition indicates that the Removal Bill of 1830—not the Bank Veto of 1832—provided the first major confrontation between those forces which would later comprise the Democratic party, and its op-

⁷¹ Adams to Alexander H. Everett, April 15, 1830. Adams MSS Trust, Reel 150. See also *Memoirs*, IX, 485 (Feb. 3, 1838), and Adams' address to his constituents in 1842, quoted in Henry Adams, *Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*, 27-28.

⁷² Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 232-233 (June 22, 25, 1830).

⁷³ Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 206 (March 22, 1830). At this time, Adams' son, Charles Francis, was taking a more conservative position on Indian affairs. See C. F. Adams to J. Q. Adams, Jan. 24 and Feb. 14, 1830, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 492, and J. Q. Adams to C. F. Adams, Feb. 5 and 21, 1830, Reel 150.

⁷⁴ Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 229 (May 22, 1830); Adams to Alexander H. Everett, May 24, 1830. Adams MSS Trust, Reel 150.

position. Votes against the bill came from the same areas that had supported Adams in 1828, would support the Bank in 1832, and would later form the nucleus of the Whig party. The New England delegation in the House voted 9 to 28 against the bill, and the entire North opposed it, 42 to 79. As usual, the South had more unity, voting 60 to 15 in favor, while the West favored it, 23 to 17.⁷⁵

Adams also saw clearly that the doctrine of Nullification was first applied by the State of Georgia to the Indians, not by South Carolina to the Tariff. Two years before the crisis in South Carolina, Adams noted with alarm that "a discovery has been made of a new attribute of State sovereignty."

It is convenient to three or four Southern States to extrude or exterminate all the Indians within their borders. They have suddenly discovered that all the Acts of Congress and all the Indian Treaties made for the last forty years are *palpably unconstitutional*. So their Legislatures have nullified them all. [They] have extended the State Laws over the persons and property of the Indians and determined that they shall be *deported* west of the Mississippi at the expence of the United States. The President of the United States tells us and tells the Indians that this is all right—and so it shall be.⁷⁶

Though the idea of Nullification had once thrived in New England during the Hartford Convention days, Adams told William Plumer, it had since become extinct there. "It now rages in the South, with much more favorable prospects of

⁷⁵ Van Every, *Disinherited*, 120; Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 377-378. Compare the House vote on Indian removal, May 24, 1830 (*Register of Debates*, Vol. VI, part 2, 1133) with the vote on Bank recharter two years later, July 3, 1832 (Vol. VIII, part 3, 3852). Of the thirty Senators who voted on both issues, 28 were "consistent," i.e., for removal and opposed to the Bank, or *vice versa*. Of the fourteen Senators who opposed removal, thirteen later became Whigs; of the sixteen who favored it, twelve became Democrats, plus John Tyler and Robert Y. Hayne. The major speeches in opposition to removal were collected in Jeremiah Evarts, editor, *Speeches on the Passage of the Bill for the Removal of the Indians* (Boston, 1830).

⁷⁶ Adams to Peter B. Porter, April 4, 1830. Adams MSS Trust, Reel 150. See also William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War* (New York, 1966), 232, and Charles S. Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism* (Baton Rouge, La., 1948), 182-186.

success. Georgia has effected it so far as respects the Indians. So have Alabama and Mississippi. South Carolina is attempting it with regard to the Tariff, and I think will succeed."⁷⁷

Adams was wrong about the eventual success of South Carolina, but he hit the mark in the case of the Indians. In 1830 and 1831 the Cherokees transferred their battle for survival in Georgia to the Supreme Court. Though he had already expressed doubts about the validity of their claim of independent status, Adams was interested enough in the case of *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* to attend the oral summations of the attorneys for the Cherokees, William Wirt and John Sergeant.⁷⁸ Wirt had been Adams' Attorney General, and the former President had the highest regard for both men. The Cherokees contended that their independent status precluded the authority of the States over them. This argument might have appealed to his Constitutional nationalism, but Adams was not surprised when Chief Justice Marshall, with Justices Story and Thompson dissenting, denied the Indians' right to sue in the Federal Courts. After all, the Cherokee argument came close to challenging the rights of the first white settlers in the New World. "As to a primitive abstract right of soil, owned by the Indians when the European settlers first came here, I did not believe in any such right," Adams told Judge Ambrose Spencer in 1830.⁷⁹

The Cherokees were more successful a year later when the

⁷⁷ Adams to William Plumer, Sept. 24, 1830, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 150. See also his letters to Alexander H. Everett, April 15, 1830, to Samuel Southard, June 6, 1830 and to Joseph Story, Oct. 23, 1830, all of which list the Indian question ahead of all other political issues.

⁷⁸ Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 343-345 (March 12, 14, 1831). For the Cherokee case see Phillips, *Georgia and States' Rights*, 74-83; John P. Kennedy, *Memoirs of the Life of William Wirt*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1849), II, 277-303, 334-343, 370-373; Abel, *Indian Consolidation*, 381-387.

⁷⁹ Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 205 (March 22, 1830). For a brief period in 1831-1832, Adams gave editorial assistance to his former Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Thomas L. McKenney, in the latter's projected history of the American Indian. Adams was forced to give up this activity because of the press of congressional and other business. See Adams to McKenney, Sept. 12, 27, Oct. 14, Dec. 5, 17, 1831, and Jan. 2, 1832, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 150; *Memoirs*, VIII, 457 (Jan. 15, 1832). McKenney's book was published as *The History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1837-1844).

Marshall Court struck down Georgia's laws concerning Indians, strongly implying that only federal authority could deal with them. But Jackson defied the Court in 1831 by refusing to enforce its decision in *Worcester v. Georgia*. Adams had foreseen the outcome a year before:

The old vice of confederacies is pressing upon us—anarchy in the members. Whenever a State does set itself in defiance against the laws or power of the Union, they are prostrated. This is what the States having Indian tribes within their limits are now doing with impunity, and all the powers of the General Government for protection of the Indians, or the execution of the treaties with them, are nullified.⁸⁰

In the 1830's the question was not whether the Indians had sovereign rights to the soil, which was denied by nearly all whites, Adams included, but whether they had any rights that white men were required by law to respect. For John Quincy Adams, as well as for most of those who would later comprise the Whig party, their constitutional nationalism combined with humanitarian sentiment and partisan opposition to give an affirmative answer.

Adams had been in Congress only a few months when he touched off a day-long House debate by presenting petitions in favor of the Cherokees and in opposition to the state of Georgia. One of the petitions contained a list of signatures from New York City which, in the tradition of the day, was forty-seven yards long. Not only did Adams offend the Jacksonians, but he also violated one of the courtesies of the House by presenting petitions from another state. A motion to table the petitions was narrowly defeated, 91-92, and they were ultimately referred to the Committee of the Whole. The roll call on tabling showed the same pattern as the vote on removal two years before, and prefigured the vote on the recharter of the Second Bank of the United States four months later.⁸¹ Adams

⁸⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 343-344 (March 12, 1831). See also Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 233-234.

⁸¹ Joseph Blunt to Adams, Feb. 17 and March 2, 1832; Adams MSS Trust, Reel 495. For the debate and vote on tabling the petition, see *Register of De-*

was at first reluctant to present the petitions, "well assured that it will be of no avail," but eventually relented. Afterward, foreseeing the defeat for the Cherokees and the Union in the *Worcester* case, he declared that "convinced that I can effect nothing, my own course will be to withhold myself from all action concerning it."⁸² For the next ten years, the tension would continue to build between Adams' sense of outrage, and his reading of political realities.

IV

The Jacksonian removal policy had as its immediate consequence an outburst of violence in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. While the Administration was relatively successful in deporting the less numerous Chickasaws and Choctaws, the Creeks, Cherokees and Seminoles either refused to negotiate treaties for "voluntary" removal or refused to leave once they were signed, claiming fraud and bad faith. In the case of the Alabama Creeks, the provisions of the removal treaty signed in 1832 allowed those Creeks who desired to remain in Alabama to be given small farms, guaranteed free from white intrusion by the federal government. Yet as soon as the word of the treaty reached Alabama, the Creek lands were overrun by white adventurers, speculators, horse thieves, and looters, eventually numbering some 10,000. The Jackson Administration was either unwilling or unable to stop the invasion. Inevitably, the Indians retaliated, providing the excuse for federal troops to move into Alabama and eventually force the total removal of the Creeks, contrary to the terms of the treaty of 1832.⁸³

At the same time, a split had developed among the Cherokees, with a minority faction favoring removal, but the majority, under John Ross, stood firm, refused to leave Georgia,

bates, Vol. VIII, part 2, 2010-2036 (March 5, 1832). Compare vote on tabling (2015-2016) with vote on Bank, cited in note 75 above.

⁸² Adams, *Memoirs*, VIII, 486-489, 492 (March 3-5, 11, 1832). See also letters from Joseph Hopkinson, Feb. 12, and Caleb Cushing, March 24, to Adams; Adams MSS Trust, Reel 495.

⁸³ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 107-190; Van Every, *Disinherited*, 160-173; Mary E. Young, "Indian Removal and Land Allotment: The Civilized Tribes and Jacksonian Justice," *American Historical Review*, LXIV, 31-45 (1958).

and cited innumerable solemn treaties and compacts. As part of an emerging pattern in such situations, the minority faction was hailed as the "true" representatives of the tribe, and negotiations were held with them. After some difficulty, the Treaty of New Echota (1835) was extracted from the minority, committing the Cherokees to removal. Since only about 400 of the 17,000 Cherokees who were eligible signed the treaty, the fraud was so obvious that even the usually docile United States Senate almost failed to approve the agreement. By this time Indian removal had become a clear issue between the Democratic and Whig parties. In 1836, an election year, the Treaty of New Echota was attacked by Webster, Clay, Calhoun, and most other opponents of Jackson and Van Buren, including of course John Quincy Adams. It was approved by the Senate with only one vote to spare. Even afterwards a national attack was mounted against the treaty, culminating with a petition signed by John Ross and 15,664 other Cherokees, but to no avail. In 1838, the army was ordered into Georgia by President Van Buren, and the "Trail of Tears" began.⁸⁴

The Seminoles for the most part were already condemned to the Florida swamplands when they were told to prepare to move west. The government construed a cautious agreement by certain Seminole leaders to an investigatory tour of western territories into an all-out commitment to removal. Again, by rounding up a minority faction and proclaiming it representative of the entire tribe, a treaty was produced and approved by the Senate in 1834. Predictably, violence broke out in Florida the following year, and it eventually developed into the Second Seminole War, which after eight years may have accounted for more white combat deaths than either the Mexican or Spanish-American Wars.⁸⁵

Congressional and administration reaction to the Indian

⁸⁴ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 238-312; Van Every, *Disinherited*, 198-235.

⁸⁵ Giddings, *Exiles of Florida*, 127-310; Van Every, *Disinherited*, 11, 178-193, 232-233; Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 324-331. See also John K. Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War* (Gainesville, Fla., 1967) and Arthur W. Thompson's introduction to Giddings, *Exiles of Florida*, cited above. Giddings listed white casualties at 1500.

hostilities of the 1830's formed a pattern which would become familiar to many Americans in the following century. White casualties would be reported in gory detail and Indian treachery denounced. Those naïve enough to seek more information or question the causes of the conflict were denounced as sickly sentimentalists and soft on Indians.⁸⁶ In any event (the argument ran) blood had been shed and it was too late to look back. Then, as in later wars, there were very few Congressmen who could resist such pressure and withhold support for the military.

It also became evident that something other than removal of the Indians was at stake. Creeks, Cherokees, and Seminoles all owned slaves, though the ownership seems to have been much more lenient and informal than that practiced by the whites.⁸⁷ With the departure of the Indians, not only their real estate but their other forms of "property" might become available. The conviction grew in the North that the Indian conflicts of the 1830's also involved slavery. This was particularly evident in the Second Seminole War, when in 1837 an agreement providing for the peaceful removal of the Seminoles was reached with the Army, but was sabotaged by Florida whites eager to obtain alleged runaway slaves thought to be living with the Indians.⁸⁸ The war was renewed for another five years. In 1836, John Quincy Adams referred to "the Indian and Negro war, already raging within our borders. . . ."⁸⁹

In the 1830's, Adams' perspective on the American Indian was undergoing a second shift. He already had ceased to regard

⁸⁶ Van Every, *Disinherited*, 184-185. For an example of the tactics of the pro-war faction, see the speeches of Congressmen Speight and Mann, *Register of Debates*, xii, part 3, 3768-3771 (May 18, 1836).

⁸⁷ Giddings, *Exiles of Florida*, 79, 153-154; Edwin L. Williams, Jr., "Negro Slavery in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, xxviii, 104 (1949); Kenneth W. Porter, "Florida Slaves and Free Negroes in the Seminole War 1835-1842," *Journal of Negro History*, xlviii, 390-421 (1943).

⁸⁸ Giddings, *Exiles of Florida*, 140; Mahon, *Second Seminole War*, 200-201. See also the speech of Congressman Horace Everett, June 3, 1836, *Congressional Globe*, Appendix, 24th Congress, 1st Session, 573-578.

⁸⁹ Adams to S. Sampson, May 21, 1836, quoted in Charles Francis Adams, Jr., *Emancipation Under Martial Law*, 84; Adams, *Memoirs*, ix, 286-287 (May 25, 1836); Bemis, *Adams and the Union*, 417.

them as a threat to the survival and security of the Union. He eventually came to regard them, and their preservation, as one of the means by which the Union could be strengthened and maintained. "The Indians, the Public Lands, the Public Debt, the Bank, have been ties, to hold the Union together," he told his former Navy Secretary, Samuel Southard.⁹⁰ It did not surprise Adams that the Jacksonians were undermining each of them. He therefore came to defend the Indians in the same way that he defended the Bank of the United States and the preservation of the nation's landed resources.

It was not only Adams' view of the Indians that was changing. His perspective on the white Anglo-Saxon American was also shifting. Whereas before, at Plymouth and at Ghent, he had confidently trumpeted the virtues of an ever-expanding white civilization, by 1836 it appeared that a substantial portion of the civilization in America was committed to the strengthening and expansion of slavery. As his opposition to the annexation of Texas and later to the Mexican war attested, he no longer believed that an expanding America automatically meant an extension of the area of freedom. The Indians were to be the immediate victims of American expansion. But for Adams, the long-range victim was to be liberty itself. So long as the Indians were preserved, their lands would be free from the white slaveholder. The cause of the Indian and the cause of antislavery were becoming one and the same.

On May 25, 1836, Adams delivered, without notes and with little preparation, a speech which he later characterized as "one of the most hazardous that I ever made."⁹¹ It was also one of his greatest. In the space of one hour, and over the shouted interruptions of many of his colleagues, the sixty-eight-year-old ex-President tied together in one unpleasant package the problem of increased Indian warfare, the attempts by the proslavery forces to stifle Congressional debate on the right of petition, and the beginnings of the drive toward Texas annexation and Manifest Destiny. He pointed out the dangers of a war of

⁹⁰ Adams to Southard, June 6, 1830. Adams MSS Trust, Reel 150.

⁹¹ Adams, *Memoirs*, ix, 289 (May 29, 1836).

aggression against Mexico, predicted that civil war over slavery would open the door to emancipation under martial law, and closed with a bitter excoriation of Jacksonian Indian policy.⁹²

John Quincy Adams was one of the first men of that time to underscore the racial aspects of Manifest Destiny. How tragic and ironic it was, he said, that the noble Anglo-Saxon race, of which he and most members of Congress were a part, had ceased to carry the burden of freedom in the world and was now plotting to carry slavery into a land where it had been legally abolished. Already he had been told that Anglo-Saxons should rejoice at the rumored execution without trial of the hated Santa Anna. (Long before, he had defended an American general who had also executed prisoners without trial, with lasting repercussions for the nation and for himself. He would not follow that road again.) Such rejoicings were "no inconsiderable evidence of the spirit which is spurring us into this war of aggression, of conquest, and of slave-making."⁹³ He then laid bare the racial basis of the coming struggle for the continent:

What is the temper of feeling between the component parts of your own Southern population, between your Anglo-Saxon, Norman French, and Moorish Spanish inhabitants of Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Missouri? Between them all and the Indian savage, the original possessor of the land from which you are scourging him already back to the foot of the Rocky Mountains? What between them all and the native American negro, of African origin, whom they are holding in cruel bondage? . . . Do you not, an Anglo-Saxon, slaveholding exterminator of the Indians, from the bottom of your soul, hate the Mexican-Spaniard-Indian, emancipator of slaves and abolisher of slavery?⁹⁴

At Plymouth in 1802 he had spoken buoyantly of making the wilderness blossom like the rose, of mighty rivers as chan-

⁹² The speech, revised by Adams for publication, may be found in *Register of Debates*, Vol. XII, part 4, 4036-4049. It is discussed in Bemis, *Adams and the Union*, 338-339, and C. F. Adams, Jr., *Emancipation Under Martial Law*, 81-99.

⁹³ *Register of Debates*, XII, part 4, 4041.

⁹⁴ *Register of Debates*, XII, part 4, 4041.

nels of communication between thriving cities, of hundreds of commodious harbors. At Ghent in 1814 he had lectured to Great Britain concerning “the unavoidable, and surely not to be regretted, progress of a population increasing with unexampled rapidity,” and of “the swarming myriads of her own children, in the process of converting the western wilderness to a powerful empire.”⁹⁵ But in Washington in 1836, he had his doubts not only about the children of Great Britain, but about powerful empires as well:

As to the annexation of Texas to your confederation, for what do you want it? Are you not large and unwieldy enough already? Do not two millions of square miles cover surface enough for the insatiate rapacity of your land-jobbers? . . . Have you not Indians enough to expel from the land of their fathers’ sepulchres, and to exterminate?⁹⁶

Though this remarkable indictment has been remembered primarily within the context of Adams’ enunciation of the doctrine of emancipation under martial law—later said to be utilized by Abraham Lincoln in 1862—it was in fact sparked neither by a discussion of slavery nor of expansion, but by a resolution calling for the distribution of army rations to white victims of Indian attacks in Alabama. Adams used the occasion to unburden himself of his forebodings concerning the future of American expansion, but he did not forget the origins of his address. Like most others, he favored aiding the victims of the Indian wars, but he did not hesitate to place the blame both on Congress and the citizens of Alabama and Georgia. They were reaping the whirlwind sown by their defiance of federal treaties, laws, and court decisions:

. . . you have sanctioned all these outrages upon justice, law, and humanity, by succumbing to the power and policy of Georgia; by

⁹⁵ Adams, *An Oration . . . at Plymouth*, 23-34; *Writings*, v, 93, 98-99. For an unconvincing argument that Adams reversed himself on Texas annexation in order to keep up with opinion in his Congressional district, see R. R. Stenberg, “J. Q. Adams: Imperialist and Apostate,” *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, xvi, 37-49 (1936).

⁹⁶ *Register of Debates*, XII, part 4, 4044.

accommodating your legislation to her arbitrary will; by tearing to tatters your old treaties with the Indians, and by constraining them, under *peine forte et dure*, to the mockery of signing other treaties with you, which, at the first moment when it shall suit your purpose, you will again tear to tatters and scatter to the four winds of heaven, till the Indian race shall be extinct upon this continent, and it shall become a problem beyond the solution of antiquaries and historical societies what the red man of the forest was.⁹⁷

There had once been an attempt to provide for the assimilation of as many Indians as possible, but that had gone by the boards with the rise of Andrew Jackson. The reaction was only to be expected:

... you have met with all the resistance which men in so helpless a condition as that of the Indian tribes could make. Of the immediate causes of the war we are not yet fully informed; but I fear you will find them, like the remoter causes, all attributable to yourselves. It is in the last agonies of a people, forcibly torn and driven from the soil which they had inherited from their fathers, and which your own example, and exhortations, and instructions, and treaties, had riveted more closely to their hearts; it is in the last convulsive struggles of their despair that this war has originated; and if it brings with it some portion of the retributive justice of Heaven upon our own people, it is our melancholy duty to mitigate, as far as the public resources of the national Treasury will permit, the distresses of the innocent of our own kindred and blood, suffering under the necessary consequences of our own wrong.⁹⁸

Adams later noted that “the greatest excitement” grew, not out of the doctrine of emancipation under martial law, but out of his indictment of United States Indian policy and of the

⁹⁷ *Register of Debates*, XII, part 4, 4048.

⁹⁸ *Register of Debates*, XII, part 4, 4049. Adams' own “kindred and blood” was indirectly struck down by the Second Seminole War, when, in Dec. 1837, his nephew Thomas Boylston Adams, Jr., died of typhoid fever while stationed in Florida. In her reaction to young Adams' death, Mrs. John Quincy Adams exceeded her husband in her denunciation of this war and U. S. Indian policy in general. See her letters to her son, Charles Francis Adams, Jan. 2-5, Jan. 6-22, Jan. 30-31, Feb. 1-3, and Feb. 4-14, 1838, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 508. The author is indebted to Messrs. Lyman Butterfield and Marc Friedlaender, Editor-in-Chief and Editor, respectively, of the Adams Papers, for bringing these to his attention.

states of Georgia and Alabama.⁹⁹ Although the speech seemed to suggest that Adams was abandoning his long-held belief in the primacy of the white man's claim to America, such was not the case. The issue simply remained as it had been for some time, a question of whether the Indians had the rights, not of soil, but of preservation. Adams hoped that the speech might in some way alter the fate of "that hapless race of native Americans, which we are exterminating with such merciless and perfidious cruelty."¹⁰⁰ The favorable reaction which the speech received among antislavery elements undoubtedly played a role in the Administration's decision to postpone Texas annexation, yet it did not have any visible effect on Indian policy.¹⁰¹ The refusal of Congress to reconsider the odoriferous Treaty of New Echota reconvinced Adams that "it is vain to plead for justice in any case concerning Indians."¹⁰²

Those who defended Indian removal came to see in John Quincy Adams one of their most formidable enemies, and treated him accordingly. They also saw in him what they believed to be the canting hypocrisy typical of many New Englanders, who, having profited from slavery and exterminated their Indians in years gone by, were now sitting in judgment upon others. It was a powerful and not entirely answerable argument. Georgia congressmen were particularly piqued. Congressman Charles Haynes of that state soon rebutted the New Englander in an able speech that not only quoted at length from the Plymouth Oration, but which also suggested that the old man's animus against Georgia arose from that

⁹⁹ Adams to Robert Walsh, June 3, 1836, quoted in C. F. Adams, Jr., *Emancipation Under Martial Law*, 86.

¹⁰⁰ Adams to Dr. George Parkman, June 22, 1836, quoted in C. F. Adams, Jr., *Emancipation Under Martial Law*, 90.

¹⁰¹ Jackson himself blamed Adams for the frustration of Texas annexation in 1836. See his letter to William B. Lewis, Sept. 18, 1843, quoted in William Graham Sumner, *Andrew Jackson* (Boston, 1899), 418.

¹⁰² Adams, *Memoirs*, ix, 518 (March 28, 1838). For the politics of Texas annexation at this time, see Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era* (New York, 1959), 109-110, and Justin H. Smith, *The Annexation of Texas* (New York, 1911), 54-57, 60-62.

state's consistent electoral opposition to the presidential candidacies of both John and John Quincy Adams. Haynes was called to order before much of the speech was read, and Adams took little notice of it. In its printed version it remains as one of the most thorough defenses of Jacksonian Indian policy.¹⁰³ Two years later, Adams noted that the Plymouth Oration had again been used against him by another Georgian, but the *Congressional Globe* gives no indication of what was said.¹⁰⁴

The denunciations by John Quincy Adams of federal Indian policy under Jackson and Van Buren attracted a following second only to that which he acquired through his defense of the right of petition in the cause of abolition. Correspondents, both red and white, hoped that he would assert even more leadership than he already had. He received a seventeen-page letter from Chief Big Kettle and twenty-three other New York Senecas who claimed fraud concerning a removal treaty negotiated in 1837.¹⁰⁵ An outraged New Yorker sent Adams a petition requesting release from United States citizenship as his response to the nation's treatment of Indians. (Adams submitted the petition, but was unsympathetic to the tactics.¹⁰⁶) He went out of his way three times in one day to be part of the audience witnessing a treaty between certain Plains Indians and the Van Buren administration.¹⁰⁷ As events moved toward the inevitable *denouement* with the Cherokees in 1838, Adams received several dozen petitions on their behalf. Increasingly the notion of divine retribution could be discerned. "Sir, if in this thing, you will be our Moses," wrote a woman from New Hampshire: we promise you that we, like his two sons, will hold up your arms

¹⁰³ The full text of Haynes's intended reply to Adams and other critics of Jacksonian Indian policy is in the *Congressional Globe*, Appendix, 24th Congress, 1st Session, 474-482, dated June 27, 1836. Adams mentions Haynes briefly in *Memoirs*, ix, 299 (June 27, 1836).

¹⁰⁴ Adams, *Memoirs*, ix, 548-549 (May 30, 1838).

¹⁰⁵ Big Kettle, *et al.*, to Adams, Feb. 28, 1838. Adams MSS Trust, Reel 508.

¹⁰⁶ Adams to Sherlock S. Gregory, Nov. 23, 1837, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 153. Also *Memoirs*, ix, 460 (Dec. 29, 1837).

¹⁰⁷ Adams, *Memoirs*, ix, 415-416 (Oct. 21, 1837).

by our united prayers, until we save the poor Indians from this dreadful fate, and this nation from the tremendous curse [which] will otherwise come upon her. . . .¹⁰⁸

On May 21, 1838, Adams presented some twenty-four petitions on behalf of the Cherokees, as did several other Whigs, all to no avail.¹⁰⁹ The petitions were tabled, and General Winfield Scott moved into Georgia.

In spite of his eloquence in 1836, and while he continued to submit pro-Indian petitions, Adams still voted funds to suppress Indian hostilities. He maintained that the government was obligated to aid the innocent victims of its policies, and thus lagged behind a small number of Whigs who by 1838 refused to vote for such appropriations.¹¹⁰ But by 1840 Adams began to waver even on this. He became increasingly disturbed over the seemingly endless Second Seminole War and its fruitless results. A careful reading of a speech by the Vermont Whig Horace Everett convinced him that in this case, as in so many others before, the whites were entirely to blame:

It depresses the spirits and humiliates the soul to think that this war is now running into its fifth year, has cost thirty millions of dollars, has successfully baffled all our chief military generals. . . . Sixteen millions of Anglo-Saxons unable to subdue in five years, by force and by fraud, by secret treachery and by open war, sixteen hundred savage warriors. . . . There is a disregard of all appearance of right in all our transactions with the Indians, which I feel is a cruel disparagement of the honor of my country.¹¹¹

(Nowhere did he comment on the equally dubious origins of the *First* Seminole War of 1817-1818.)

It was in such a mood that Adams released a volley of his

¹⁰⁸ M. M. Brooks to Adams, April 23, 1838, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 509. See also petitions of A. Johnson and J. B. Hayes, April 26; A. B. Allen and H. P. Pratt, May 1; Horace Hall, May 2; Joseph Battell [?], May 4; unsigned, May 7; I. M. Carr, May 10; and Francis H. Case, May 12, 1838.

¹⁰⁹ Adams, *Memoirs*, ix, 536 (May 21, 1838).

¹¹⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, ix, 477 (Jan. 24, 1838); x, 9-10 (June 4, 1838). Adams seems to have been the only Whig from Massachusetts to have supported appropriations for the suppression of Indian hostilities in 1838.

¹¹¹ Adams, *Memoirs*, x, 256 (April 7, 1840).

vaunted sarcasm when he learned that the government of the United States had purchased at a cost to the taxpayers of \$151.72 each, a number of bloodhounds from Cuba (plus five Spanish interpreters since the dogs were monolingual) to pursue Indians and runaway slaves across the Florida swamps.¹¹² On March 9, 1840, he presented the following resolution to the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the Secretary of War be directed to report to this House the natural, political, and martial history of the bloodhounds, showing the peculiar fitness of that class of warriors to be the associates of the gallant army of the United States, specifying the nice discrimination of his scent between the blood of the free-man and the blood of the slave—between the blood of the armed warrior and that of women or children—between the blood of the black, white, and colored men—between the blood of the savage Seminoles and that of the Anglo-Saxon pious Christian. Also, a statement of the number of bloodhounds and their conductors, imported by this government, or by the authorities of Florida, from the island of Cuba, and the cost of that importation. Also, whether a further importation of the same heroic race into the State of Maine, to await the contingency of a contested Northeastern boundary question, is contemplated, or to set an example to be followed by our possible adversary in the event of a conflict. Whether measures have been taken to secure exclusively to ourselves the employment of this extraordinary force, and whether he deems it expedient to extend to the said bloodhounds and their posterity the benefits of the pension laws.¹¹³

The introduction of the bloodhounds was too much for Adams. The following July, he spoke for more than five hours in 90° heat in unsuccessful opposition to further expenditures on the Second Seminole War.¹¹⁴ It was to continue until 1842, when all but a few Seminoles were rounded up and shipped westward.

¹¹² Giddings, *Exiles of Florida*, 266.

¹¹³ *Congressional Globe*, VIII (March 17, 1840), 252; Adams, *Memoirs*, x, 233 (March 9, 1840).

¹¹⁴ *Congressional Globe*, VIII, 527-528 (July 14, 1840); Adams, *Memoirs*, x, 333-335 (July 14, 15, 1840). The *Globe* listed 23 opponents of the appropriation, but only 20 names were given.

This was the background to the appointment of John Quincy Adams as Chairman of the House Indian Affairs Committee following the Whig takeover of Congress in 1841. In the circumstances, it was unexpected and unwanted. His sense of futility and frustration led him to reject not only the chairmanship of the committee, but membership on it. A meeting with John Ross and a group of Cherokees—who by that time had been deported to Arkansas and were seeking Adams' help in redressing frauds which had arisen out of their removal—caused him to confess to the “harrow upon my feelings” that the Indian tragedy created for him.¹¹⁵

Adams had little to say about the Indians after 1841. His remaining years were caught up in his spectacular trial for censure before the House of Representatives, and his successful fight against the congressional gag rule. Moreover, Indian removal had become a reality by the 1840's, and there was nothing left to be done. In 1843, Adams made what became a triumphal tour through western New York, the one region which, outside of the Plymouth District, had always remained faithful to him and his ideas. One Sunday in July at Niagara Falls, he inquired for the nearest church at which to worship. Upon being told that it was “not fashionable” for resort guests to go to church, Adams joined a group headed for divine worship at the Tuscarora Indian reservation seven miles away. As he later related it, following the sermon it was announced to the Indians that “John Quincy Adams, once President of the United States was present; whereupon I made to them a short address.”¹¹⁶ He did not record what he said, but an anonymous observer reported:

Mr. Adams alluded to his advanced age, and said that this was the first time he had ever looked upon their beautiful fields and forests—that he was truly happy to meet them there and join with them

¹¹⁵ Adams, *Memoirs*, x, 491-492 (June 30, 1841); Ross to Adams, June 16, 1841, Adams MSS Trust, Reel 518; Adams to Ross, June 29, 1841, Reel 154. Also Seneca White, *et al.*, to Adams, June 18, 1841, and Joseph Smith to Adams, June, 1841, Reel 518.

¹¹⁶ Adams, *Diary* (unpublished) July 23, 1843. Adams MSS Trust, Reel 47. See also Bemis, *Adams and the Union*, 466-468.

in the worship of our common Parent—reminded them that in years past he had addressed them from the position which he then occupied, in language, at once that of his station and his heart, as “his children”—and that now, as a private citizen, he hailed them in terms of equal warmth and endearment, as his “brethren and sisters.” He alluded, with a simple eloquence which seemed to move the Indians much, to the equal care and love with which God regards all his children, whether savage or civilized, and to the common destiny which awaits them hereafter, however various their lot here. He touched briefly and forcibly on the topics of the sermon which they had heard, and concluded with a beautiful and touching benediction upon them.¹¹⁷

In his Plymouth Oration of nearly two generations before, Adams had complimented his listeners on the fact that their Pilgrim ancestors had not erected “colossal statues upon pedestals of human bones, to provoke and insult the tardy hand of heavenly retribution.”¹¹⁸ But the anti-Texas speech of 1836, and his outburst to his diary in 1841, are strong indications that in Adams’ mind the “land-robbing” Anglo-Saxon American no longer merited such indulgence. “I had long entertained and cherished the hope,” he later told his constituents,

that these public lands were among the chosen instruments of Almighty power, not only of promoting the virtue, welfare and happiness of millions upon millions of individuals and families of the human race, but of improving the condition of man, by establishing the practical, self-evident truth of the natural equality and brotherhood of all mankind, as the foundation of all human government, and by banishing Slavery and War from the earth. . . . Was all this an Utopian daydream? Is the one talent, entrusted by the Lord of the harvest, for the improvement of the condition of man, to be hidden under a bushel? Is the lamp, destined to enlighten the world, to be extinguished by the blasting breath of Slavery?¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Quoted in William H. Seward, *Life and Public Services of John Quincy Adams* (Auburn, N. Y., 1849), 312-313.

¹¹⁸ Adams, *An Oration . . . at Plymouth*, 8-9.

¹¹⁹ John Quincy Adams, *Address of John Quincy Adams to his Constituents . . . September 17th, 1842* (Boston, 1842), 51-52; Henry Adams, *Degradation of the Democratic Dogma*, 27-31.

His southern critics were correct: there was a double standard in Adams' views of white expansion and Indian rights. He refused to permit the Indians to stem the progress of a civilization built upon the woods and templed hills that remained his ideal of America. But the plantation-oriented aggrandizement that Adams saw as the cornerstone to Jacksonian "democracy" was not what he had in mind. Better to let the Indians remain, than to allow the once-free lands to be tilled by the slave, or to fall under the land speculator's auction hammer. The land speculator was no better than the savage: in fact he was worse, for all knew that the Indian loved the land for its own sake, and not for profit in the marketplace. Thus Adams could reconcile his support of white expansion in 1802 with his opposition in 1836.

It is tempting to read more than simple dismay and frustration into Adams' remarks in 1841. After all, if the Indian was to be exterminated as a result of the white man's expansion, if indeed it was to be a question for future learned societies as to what the red man was like, then whose diplomacy was responsible for making that expansion and extermination possible? If the Second Seminole War was part of a "sickening mass of putrefaction," then who had arranged for the incorporation of Florida and the Seminoles into the United States in the first place? If Andrew Jackson, his administration, and its successors, were responsible for the policy which was "among the heinous sins of this nation," who was it that had rushed to Jackson's defense on a matter concerning those same Seminoles when the General had needed it most?

As was the case with his dedication to the antislavery cause, Adams' sympathy with the American Indian came late in his life. Both causes he came to see as involved with the maintenance of the Union, yet here the resemblance ends. As early as 1820 Adams was convinced that a life devoted to the cause of emancipation "would be nobly spent or sacrificed." By 1838 he was able to write "that the fall of slavery is predetermined in the counsels of Omnipotence I cannot doubt; it is a part of the great moral improvement in the condition of man, attested

by all the records of history."¹²⁰ Yet Adams had also written of the extinction of the American Indian as being equally "prejudged." By whom? By God? Or Andrew Jackson? Or both? Such an alliance was beyond Adams' comprehension. And what if the same progress and improvement that Adams professed to see in the nineteenth century doomed the Indian at the same time it doomed slavery? Small wonder that he shrank from the dilemma and fell back upon the comforting notion of divine retribution.

¹²⁰ Adams, *Memoirs*, IV, 531 (Feb. 24, 1820); x, 63 (Dec. 13, 1838).