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W. P. Boudinot, Editor

THE OKMULGEE CONSTITUTION

The New York Sun comments at some length on the features of the bill introduced into Congress by Mr. Wells to organize the Territory of Oklahoma, and while opposing the bill as being palpably unjust to the Indians, takes up the matter of the Okmulgee Constitution, which it calls a "plausible but injudicious scheme," and one "open to many serious objections," and says:

The Okmulgee Constitution proposed the formation of a Territorial Government, the officers of which should be chosen by the Indians from their own race, practically independent of the United States Government but operating under its sanction, without any modification of the tribal relations already existing among them. It was in fact intended as an alliance of the Indians against the encroachments of

the whites, and carried into effect would result in the establishment of a barbaric dominion within a civilized republic, subdivided into nearly twenty different nations, all speaking different languages, and each under its individual chiefs."

So here we have the serious objections, which have become common however in the newspapers, ever since Governor Brown's figure of speech about the Chinese wall. But we will let the Sun answer them itself, which it does futher on in the same article, in those words:

"But nevertheless these Indians have rights which should be respected, and these rights the proposed legislation would treat with utter disregard. And this notwithstanding that there is every prospect that the coveted country will be opened up to white settlement, under proper restrictions, by the Indians themselves, if they were permitted to go on in their own way."

Which means that under the liberal laws and regulations of the several Indian Nations, white people are being constantly admitted to citizenship. As we have said before over and over again, any body who will take a little time to read the Okmulgee

Constitution, can see that no change whatever was contemplated or could be made by it in the laws as they now are regarding the admission of citizens. It is plain why those who would deny the Indian any rights at all, should for the purpose of forwarding their own plans for plundering them, continually misrepresent and malign the motives of those who framed the Okmulgee Constitution. But how are we to account for this hot and cold blowing by the Sun in the matter! What imaginary spectre was therein the constitution to frighten those who are candid and just enough to admit that all will be well if we are allowed to go on in our own way?

There is something in this cry against the Okmulgee Constitution, which apart from the injustice done to us by it, appears palpably absurd when we consider the relation in which we stand to the government of the United States. Every body, it seems to us, ought to know that a general Indian government would be nothing in the way of the operation a law of Congress providing for the establishment of another in its stead. We could then if we deemed the law unjust to us, protest as we are now doing, but that would be all. To pass the bill in Congress and then

let it have the approval of the President would be all that would be needed, -- the Indian government would be at an end. General Grant of course, like anybody else knows this, and yet it will be remembered that in his message to Congress transmitting the Okmulgee Constitution just after its adoption by the Council, he recommended a compliance with the wishes of the Indians, so far as "consistent with safety." Where was the danger? Did it threaten the Indians themselves? If we could suppose for a moment that the guardian was so sollicitous for the welfare of the ward as to apprehend danger to the latter from his own acts, then we would either have to consider the guardian as a paragon of gentleness and good intentions, or that the ward was the feeblest and most abject of human kind. Who, whether white or red is willing to accept either of these conclusions?

Where was the danger -- and whom did it threaten? If the Indian nations, over whom the Okmulgee Constitution was designed to operate were enemies and not friends of the Federal Government -- if their life was one of war and not of peace -- if they rejected civilization instead of fostering and seeking it -- if they were powerful instead of being

weak in numbers, then there might be reason in the cry of danger. It is not necessary to say that the day of Indian coalitions against the power of the United States has passed. But suppose it has not, -- it, could only exist elsewhere among a few to whom war is yet a pastime. But for us -- the people of the proposed Indian territory, though we may still be called barbarians by some, yet even those who thus call us so, must themselves admit that we are sufficiently civilized to know our weakness, in any armed resistance to the Great Government. The danger then is not from war -- that would be too absurd to think of. Before we could seriously think of fighting, we would have to go back beyond a century in time; resume the scalp dance and the warriors' paint, the barbed arrow, and the tomahawk, and leave our farms, and schools, and all our present hopes "to dumb forgetfulness a prey." We apprehend that this talk of ours may provoke a smile as being out of place; but is it any more out of place or uncalled for than the cry of danger to the Great Government from the acts of an Indian Council? But this general fear, whether feigned or real, of a Chinese wall or barbaric dominion, is strongly suggestive to us as showing the wishes and expectations of the mass of the American people: --

that is that our little nationalities as they are, must in time go down. Some, would overthrow them outright, by the passage of a law opening the country to indiscriminate settlement against the protestations of the Indians themselves. Others would await the consent of the Indians; but all have in view the coming of the time, be it long or short. Hence, every action taken by the Indian Nations in concert, is narrowly watched; because there is the general apprehension that they might by some action of their own, ward off for a long period the extinction of their nationalities. It is worthy of remark that in all the talk against the Okmulgee Constitution as the proposed foundation of a general Indian government, men have contented themselves with merely crying "danger" without ever attempting to point it out. They have taken it for granted that the sole object of the Council was to protect the Indian nations, but never have so far as we know, attempted to show how this self-protection of the Indians would be inimical to the just requirements and expectations of the people of the United States. They did not attempt to show it, for the very plain reason that they could not succeed. The language of the Constitution itself, and the laws and customs of the

Nations are all against it.

It appears to have been taken for granted, that if the Indian Government had ever gone into operation, it would have been permitted to go on; -- if not so, then all this cry about a barbaric dominion surrounded by a Chinese wall was but an idle waste of breath. The fear was, that the Government of the United States would be just enough to the Indians, not to interfere with their government when established, and that it would permit it to go on as a trial work at least. And there was another selfish wicked apprehension: -- and that was, that the Indian Nations under their own general government, would give no just cause for complaint against them, -- and would not make it necessary for the intervention of Federal authority to protect trade and commerce, and the rights of citizens of the United States; -- and that under this new order of things, the Indian Nations acting together, would be allowed to prepare themselves for the change in their relations with the United States, without having it thrust upon them wholly regardless of their wishes, in the shape of some plundering Congressional bill.

Thus, because an Indian Council, proposed that the Indian Nations should act jointly in forwarding

their own interests under their treaties and the inter-
course law, -- they could not, they dared not do more,
they are prejudged, and their motives impugned. Their
intention, which in any other people would be consid-
ered a laudable one, is falsified, and then turned against
them to cover and forward the design of the strong to
rob the weak.