

President Andrew Jackson's Second Annual Speech Before Congress, December 6, 1830

The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual states, and to the Indians themselves. The pecuniary advantages which it promises to the government are the least of its recommendations. It puts an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the general and state governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. By opening the whole territory between Tennessee on the north and Louisiana on the south to the settlement of the whites it will incalculably strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent states strong enough to repel future invasions without remote aid. It will relieve the whole state of Mississippi and the western part of Alabama of Indian occupancy, and enable those states to advance rapidly in population, wealth, and power.

It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites; free them from the power of the states; enable them to pursue happiness in their own way and under their own rude institutions; will retard the progress of decay, which is lessening their numbers, and perhaps cause them gradually, under the protection of the government and through the influence of good counsels, to cast off their savage habits and become an interesting, civilized, and Christian community...

Toward the aborigines of the country no one can indulge a more friendly feeling than myself, or would go further in attempting to reclaim them from their wandering habits and make them a happy, prosperous people...

The present policy of the government is but a continuation of the same progressive change by a milder process. The tribes which occupied the countries now constituting the Eastern states were annihilated or have melted away to make room for the whites. The waves of population and civilization are rolling to the westward, and we now propose to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to a land where their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual.

Doubtless it will be painful to leave the graves of their fathers; but what do they more than our ancestors did or than our children are now doing? To better their

Faithfull 7/4/12 9:54 AM
Comment: Why is President Jackson trying to convince Congress of the benefits of a policy that has already been passed by Congress? Does this suggest continued opposition to the policy?

Faithfull 7/4/12 10:17 AM
Comment: Given Jackson's history as an Indian fighter, can we trust that he wants to assist Native Americans?

Faithfull 7/3/12 8:36 PM
Comment: Why is the Indian Removal Act being supported now in 1830? Is the gold rush in Georgia motivating this? Are there other significant "collisions" between white and Native American taking place before this?

Faithfull 7/4/12 10:25 AM
Comment: What does Jackson mean by the terms "civilized" and "savage?"

Faithfull 7/4/12 10:17 AM
Comment: Is Jackson hoping to convince states by appealing to their greed?

Faithfull 7/4/12 9:58 AM
Comment: Is this argument directed at the Christian missionaries who opposed the Indian Removal Act? Jackson hopes to show that his policy will actually be the best for the welfare of Native Americans.

Faithfull 7/4/12 10:26 AM
Comment: The Cherokees were able to create an alphabet, farm and adopt European styles. Why are they being forced to move if they achieved "civilization" in Georgia?

Faithfull 7/3/12 8:30 PM
Comment: Is this an argument meant to win over members of Congress who think that removal is too harsh? Were there many members of Congress who thought Indian Removal was harsh?

Faithfull 7/4/12 10:23 AM
Comment: In 1830, was the belief widespread that the land west of the Mississippi would not be settled by whites?

Source: <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/25690>

condition in an unknown land our forefathers left all that was dear in earthly objects. Our children by thousands yearly leave the land of their birth to seek new homes in distant regions. Does humanity weep at these painful separations from everything, animate and inanimate, with which the young heart has become entwined? Far from it. It is rather a source of joy that our country affords scope where our young population may range unconstrained in body or in mind, developing the power and faculties of man in their highest perfection. These remove hundreds and almost thousands of miles at their own expense, purchase the lands they occupy, and support themselves at their new homes from the moment of their arrival. Can it be cruel in this government when, by events which it cannot control, the Indian is made discontented in his ancient home to purchase his lands, to give him a new and extensive territory, to pay the expense of his removal, and support him a year in his new abode? How many thousands of our own people would gladly embrace the opportunity of removing to the West on such conditions? If the offers made to the Indians were extended to them, they would be hailed with gratitude and joy.

Faithfull 7/3/12 8:25 PM

Comment: Jackson makes an interesting argument here that the forced removal of Indians is similar to voluntary migration of immigrants.

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

Faithfull 8/2/12 1:03 PM

Comment: Jackson argues that the U.S. government should be seen as generous for giving land and moving expenses to Native Americans. Native Americans might argue that Jackson is only serving white settlers who wanted Native American lands, and that the United States should honor past agreements and treaties. Webster, Clay, and Crockett all argued that Indian Removal was cruel and unnecessary.

Source: Andrew Jackson, "Second Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1830."

Faithfull 7/4/12 10:05 AM

Comment: Native Americans had a right to autonomy and self-government. Why must they "submit to the laws of the states?"

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Faithfull 7/4/12 10:13 AM

Comment: Jackson's speech is historically significant because it creates support for the removal of Native Americans east of the Mississippi and leads to the "Trail of Tears."

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