

Address by David Folsom to William Ward

Two or three days since, a talk which came from the white house, was delivered to us. We sat and heard it. It came from our Great Father. He says that he has heard that there are bad white men among us, who prevent our moving to the West of the Mississippi, by their bad counsel. We do not know that it is so. There are old men residing among us, who have married Choctaw women. They take no part in our Councils. They have no concern in them. There are some white men who sit near the edges of our country, who steal our horses, cattle and hogs, who lay whiskey there. These rob us and impoverish us. It may be that *they* have said something to prevent our removing to the West, which has been reported to our Great Father. We do not know. Some of these men of ruin, sometimes come into our country. Here sits Col. Ward, the white man king. If he discover them, he will drive them out. If he do not discover them, we will tell him. If he need help, we the chiefs, captains and warriors, will help him to remove them. Concerning the *good* white men among us, for whom Col. Ward will make a letter, we have nothing to say. We fear nothing from them. This is understood by all the head men and warriors present, in this white house. To those who are not here we will give information. So that all shall understand this talk. This is all I have to say upon this subject.

We do not wish to sell our land and remove. This land our Great Father above gave us. We stand on it. We stood on it before the white man came to the edge of the American land. We sit on it still. It belongs to no one in any place but to ourselves. Our land is not borrowed land. White men came and sat down here and there, and are all around us. When they have wished to buy land of us, we have had good councils together. The white man always said "The land is yours; it is yours, it is yours." We have always been true friends to the American people. We have lived in friendship. We have not spoiled the least thing belonging to an American. Although it has been thus, now a very different talk is sent to us. We are told that the king of Mississippi is about to extend his laws over us. We are distressed. We the chiefs and the beloved men of this nation are distressed. Our hands are not strong; we are a small people; we do not know much: The king of Mississippi has strong arms, many warriors and much knowledge. He is about to lay his laws upon us. We are distressed.

Col. Ward knows that we have just begun to build new houses and make new fields, and to purchase iron and set up blacksmith shops with our annuity. We have begun to make axes, hoes and ploughs. We have some schools. We

have begun to learn, and we have also begun to embrace the Gospel. We are like an infant *so high*, who has just begun to walk. [Here the chief bowed and extended his right hand down as low as his knee.] So it is with us. We have just begun to rise and go. And our Great Father who sits in the white house looking this way, says to us, Unless you go yonder [pointing to the West] the white man will extend his laws over you. We do not say that his words are lies. We think they are true; and we respect them as sacred. But we are distressed. O that our Great Father would love us! O that Col. Ward would love us! O that the king of Mississippi would love us.

The American people say that they love liberty. They talk much about it. They boast of their own liberty. Why will they take it from the red man? They say they will make none slaves. We think our Great Father is true and good; and will not himself lay laws upon us. We think that the king of Mississippi is true, and that his warriors are true and good. It may be they will not lay their laws upon us. Here we have lived, and here we wish to live. But whatever the white man wishes to do us, he will do. If he shall will us to stay here, we shall stay. If he will us to go, we shall go. This is all I can say now. We cannot make a long talk. Our nation are not all assembled in Council. The Chief of one district is not here. If Col. Ward wishes to receive a talk on paper, we can give him one in about a month. We wish to consult together, and with Col. Leflore, the other chief. After this, we will give Col. Ward a talk on paper. It will be a short one. In talking to Col. Ward, we consider him the messenger of our Great Father. We believe his words. When we speak to him, it is as though we spake to our Great Father himself. This is all I have to say.

[This speech was delivered in Choctaw.]

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