

Andrew Jackson Administration

YOU'RE THE PRESIDENT of the United States. You must deal with a serious problem in the state of Georgia. This past December, 1829, the state government said that all the land belonging to the Cherokee nation would from then on belong to Georgia. The Cherokee would have no title to their land and anyone with Cherokee blood wouldn't even have the right to testify in court. The Georgians want the Cherokee moved, by force if necessary, west of the Mississippi River. They support the Indian Removal Act, now before Congress. There is a place called "Oklahoma" set aside for all the Indians in the East, including the Cherokee. Personally, you agree that Georgia has a right to make whatever laws they want, but the Cherokee have treaties signed by the U.S. government guaranteeing them their land forever. Of course, you personally never signed any of those treaties.

You're getting a lot of pressure on this one. On the one hand white missionaries and lots of northerners say that Georgia is violating Cherokee rights. Cherokee supporters point out that the Indians have done everything they can to become like civilized white people: they invented an alphabet, started a newspaper, wrote a constitution, started farms, and even wear white people's clothes. Many church groups supported your election in 1828, and you want their support when you run for re-election in 1832. On the other hand, a lot of farmers and plantation owners would like to get on that good Cherokee land. Recently, gold was discovered on Cherokee territory, and gold-seekers are already starting to sneak onto their

land. Your main base of support was in the South, especially from poor and medium-sized farmers.

From your standpoint, you have to look after the welfare of the whole country. The main crop in the South is cotton—it is a crucial crop to the prosperity of the slave-owning South and to the new cloth factories of the North. Cotton, grown with slave labor, brings in tremendous profits to slaveowners and you're a slaveowner yourself, so you understand their concerns. There is excellent land being taken up by the Cherokee, as well as some of the other Indian tribes in the region: the Creeks, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole—though some of these have already moved west. This land could be used to grow cotton for the world. The exports of cotton to England and other countries are vital to the health of the economy. Cotton sent north is building up young industries and you can see there is great potential for manufacturing in the North.

The Seminole Indians who live in Florida represent a special problem. For years, they have taken in escaped slaves from southern plantations. Sometimes, they've even raided plantations in order to free slaves. They are a threat to the whole plantation system in the South. A number of years ago, you ordered the U.S. military to attack the Seminoles in Florida and had their farms burned. The proposed Indian Removal Act would get rid of the Seminoles forever by moving them to Indian Territory. The escaped slaves living with them would then be taken away from them and sold. ■