

**ADDRESS OF COL. REDDICK MCKEE,
Before the Committee on "Indian Reser-
vations," at the Capitol, Sacramento City,
Saturday Evening, March 20, 1852.**

Hon. Mr. Coffroth in the Chair.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Committee:

When in the latter part of January, I was honored by an invitation by the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, to address that committee on the general policy and operations of the U. S. Agents in California, I made several brief statements and explanations, which I hoped would render any further recurrence to the matter, on my part, unnecessary—at least in public. In this however, it appears I was mistaken, for my remarks on that occasion were scarcely published, before the most absurd, ungenerous, unfounded attacks upon both our policy and proceedings, in the shape of formal reports from committees, and speeches in both Houses, made their appearance in the public prints. These reports were sent all over the country to prejudice the public mind, not only in California, but at Washington, with the avowed design of securing if possible, the rejection of our Treaties with the Indians—thus opening up again the causes of anxiety and bloodshed, on the frontiers, and very possibly involving the State in another Indian War. Personally, I had far less interest in this than thousands of your citizens, and being a believer in the axiom that "truth is mighty and must prevail," I felt disposed to let the majority carry out, if they would, what I understood was already a foregone conclusion. I take the responsibility and the consequences. To be sure I felt disgusted with the injustice and ingratitude of some of my own countrymen, and deplored the existence among us of that class of small potato politicians, who under the shield of "privilege," "freedom of debate," embrace opportunities to—

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"—— just hint a fault—and hesitate dislike, Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike "

Subsequent reflection however, and consultation with friends, led me to think it was my duty to interpose, and if possible save the Legislature from the disgrace which sooner or later, must result from hasty and unwise legislation, based not upon facts or an intelligent public policy, but upon mere street gossip, or rumors originating with interested or prejudiced individuals.

With these feelings I addressed a respectful note to my friend Mr. Lyon, of the Assembly, which resulted in a prompt recommittal of certain resolutions which had been almost matured; and has afforded me this evening the privilege of addressing this committee, and the respectable audience now before me.

As it appears to be the practice here in California, in the exercise of "the largest liberty," for some honorable members to get up in their places, guess at, and then denounce the motives, as well as the conduct of public men; and as from past experience I have no reason to expect exemption in the future. I deem it proper to advertise you further, that in seeking this interview, in taxing your kind attention while I offer a few remarks, I am influenced by no fears of the most rigid scrutiny, or investigation of my official conduct here or elsewhere. I come to ask no favors in that regard; I have no apologies to make; nothing to offer in explanation or extenuation of the miserable charges which have been by innuendo, and in situation, of personal interests and speculation so frequently uttered in your hearing. All that sort of thing I throw back here in your presence, as I have done elsewhere, with utter scorn and defiance. It would seem that some

so frequently uttered in your presence, as I have done elsewhere, with utter scorn and defiance. It would seem that some honorable gentlemen cannot even conceive of large business transactions with or for the government, unaccompanied by speculation and fraud. All public officers are rogues, *per se*. This trick however, is getting to be well understood. The biggest rogue in the crowd, is not unfrequently the very man who cries "stop thief" the loudest.

For the Legislature of California as a body. I entertain all proper respect, and intend nothing personally disrespectful; still I shall be plain, such is my habit, and if anything I may say shall sound harsh "to ears polite," I beg you to bear in mind that I have had abundant provocation; that I have been "most excellently well abused" in this very hall; and that in this war "the first stone" was not thrown by me. Deem me not therefore "your enemy because I tell you the truth."

Let us then, Mr. Chairman, take a hasty glance at the past history, and present position, of this grave and momentous subject of Indian affairs in California.

You doubtless recollect that, after a long, exciting, and deeply interesting controversy in Congress,—California was finally, by the influence of a whig administration, and of whig votes, against the almost universal opposition of Southern democrats, admitted into the glorious sisterhood of American States. Your Senators and members of Congress, after a long probation, were admitted to their seats, and at once addressed themselves to the preparation and passage of such laws, for the benefit of the new State, as they considered most important for her welfare and prosperity. One of the first, extended over this entire State, as Indian country, the Indian laws of the United States, thus making it expressly the duty of the General Government to take up, and manage, exclusively.

the Indian laws of the United States, thus making it expressly the duty of the General Government to take up, and manage, exclusively, these important interests in California, as it had done in the older States. Then followed an act requiring the President to appoint forthwith, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, three Commissioners, to visit, treat with, and extinguish the Indian title, whatever it might be, to all their lands within the limits of the State. These measures were urged through Congress by the personal influence of your Senators, Dr. Gwin and Col. Fremont, and near midnight on the very last day of the session the measure was perfected by the unanimous approval by the Senate, of the gentlemen nominated by the President. One of these had been a member of the Convention which framed your State Constitution; the other two were contemplating a removal, with their families, to the Pacific coast.

(*En passant*, let me say that, in my opinion, no State in this Confederacy, has on the floor of the Senate, a more industrious, indefatigable member, than has California in the person of Dr. Gwin.) The utmost despatch was used, a large amount of Indian goods, for presents, were purchased in the New York market, and in about ninety days, the Commissioners, with full general instructions, were here on the ground ready to commence operations. While an escort of 100 U. S. troops were preparing for the first expedition, the Commissioners issued a circular, or *quasi* proclamation, to the people on the frontiers, (which I will thank the Secretary to read,) and immediately repaired to San Jose, to pay their respects to the Governor and authorities, and obtain advice and information as to the course most proper to be pursued. They conferred freely with Gov. M'Dougal, and all the leading men of both parties, as to the general policy, afterwards adopted. Alarming difficulties existed in several of the frontier settle

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sers of that day, lent themselves to no such calculations, or political schemes. On the contrary, as the official despatches to Col. Johnson, Maj. Burney, Maj. Savage, and others, in command of the State troops, will abundantly show, they evinced a patriotic desire to aid the Commissioners of the U. States in their arduous and still doubtful labors; and in point of fact these State officers did advise with and assist them in several of the first and most important treaties, in the Mariposa and San Joaquin country. The Commissioners then acting as a Joint Board, soon discovered that the true policy was not to congregate the mountain and warlike tribes, with those of the plains, upon one or two large districts, but to separate and divide them upon

several small reservations, fifty or sixty miles apart, with room for white settlements between them, and thus guard against future combinations. As a general thing, they found the Indians unwilling to remove from their old fishing and hunting grounds, and while they were, in almost all cases, excluded wholly from the mining region, the lands assigned for their use were generally those they insisted upon having, and such as were recommended to the Commissioners as proper and convenient, by the State officers, and the white citizens of the neighborhood. In no single instance, that I have heard of, have any lands been set apart as reservations, except upon the advice and recommendation of the white settlers, immediately and personally interested. In several cases I know the lines, or boundaries, have been altered to suit the views of citizens, or to remove the Indians further from mining country. The only objections I ever heard against any of our early treaties, were, that we assigned for the Indians, too poor, or too little land.

Our first treaty was with six tribes or bands on the Mariposa, in March; the second with sixteen tribes, on the San Joaquin, in April; among them several of the most troublesome and warlike in the State. By these first treaties the confidence of the war party was completely broken, peace was restored, the settlers re-assured, immediately returned to their work. All cause of disquietude passed away; no disturbances have since occurred; and all my information from that quarter leads to the conclusion, that the highly colored statements made in this city about the dissatisfaction of the people, and the unpopularity of our treaties, is all gammon, the work of a few designing or interested men, ambitious of promotion to office, and entitled to no confidence whatever. For the truth of the foregoing statements, and as touching the general and cordial acquiescence of the people of the Mariposa, the Fresno, and the

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entitled to no confidence wha ever. For the
truth of the foregoing statements, and as touch-
ing the general and cordial acquiescence of the
settlers along the Mariposa, the Fresno, and the
San Joaquin rivers. I am authorized to refer the
committee to Major Burney, the Sheriff of Mar-
iposa county, Mr. Brownlee, a merchant in
Agua Frio, Judge Lewis, and Judge Marvin—
all now in this city. The last-named gentle-
man, I observe, is present in the Hall, and I
ask the favor of his stating publicly whether I
report the facts truly.

[Judge Marvin here rose, and corroborated
the statements made by Col. McKee, so far as
his information extended. He was with the
Commissioners in their Southern expedition, ap-
proved of their proceedings, and thought that
the people generally did. With the value of
every part of the reservations, he was not ac-
quainted, but generally they were poor, and of
little value.]

Soon after this time, the Commissioners, in
view of the vast extent of the State, and of the
Indian population scattered over it, from the
Gila to the Oregon line, concluded to separate,
as by their instructions they were authorized to
do, and address themselves to the work in dif-
ferent districts; the Southern fell to Col. Bar-
bour, the middle to Dr. Wozencraft, and the
Northern to myself. Some progress has been
made in the Southern and Middle districts, and
I have recently returned from a thorough ex-
ploration of the Northern, except the country
lying on the upper Salmon and Trinity rivers
from which I was shut out by the snow on the
mountains. In all Northern California I pro-
pose to establish, including Clear Lake, but
four reservations, and on two of them no white
person ever resided, and on a third but two or
three men, keeping a rude ferry. In the whole
State there may be up to this time some eigh-

Three men, keeping a range
State there may be up to this time some eigh-
teen or twenty reserves set off, varying in ex-
tent from one to five or ten leagues. In the
mountains and along the foot hills, it made no
sort of difference whether they were five leagues
or twenty: the country will never be located or
settled by whites or men of any other color.

Here, Mr. Chairman, let me remark, equally
good results have happily followed our labors,
in every other part of the State yet visited. No
single case of difficulty, robbery, murder, or
other outbreak of Indian hostility has occurred
among any of the tribes with whom we have
made compacts. The Indians are setting the
whites of this country a most remarkable ex-
ample of regard for their treaty stipulations.
Their bargain or trade (as their word for treaty
signifies) has been kept inviolate. They assured
me at the time it should be, and thus far I have
not been disappointed in a single case. I have
indeed entire confidence that if peace shall be
disturbed, it will arise from our inability to
carry out our promises, or from the fault of un-
principled white men, of which class, unfortun-
ately, but too many have taken refuge on our
frontiers, and in close proximity to the Indians
men who might with the utmost propriety ex-
claim with the poet, who sang of the devoted
inhabitants of Botany Bay:

"True patriots we: for be it understood,
We left our country for our country's good."

The fact referred to is, however, alike inter-
esting and remarkable, and goes far, I submit,
to prove that the general policy adopted for the
pacification of your frontiers, is a wise and
beneficent policy, deserving at least a candid
trial and examination before it is condemned,
disavowed, and repudiated. Mr. Chairman, if
the promises we have made to the Indian tribes
in California, in the name of the Government
and people of the United States, shall from any
cause whatever fail to be made good, carried

disavowed, and repudiated. Mr. Chairman, if the promises we have made to the Indian tribes in California, in the name of the Government and people of the United States, shall from any cause whatever fail to be made good, carried out fairly and to the letter, you need never again attempt to secure their confidence. Our bargains with them have all been made on the basis of the good faith heretofore observed in our Indian negotiations, and I shall blush for my country and my color, if our solemn assurances are not made good. Until since my return from Northern California, it never once crossed my mind that a serious objection could be made to these arrangements by any man having the interests of California, the honor of his country, or the claims of humanity in his bosom.

My only fears arose from objections at Washington, because of the immense amount of money which the high rates on this coast would require for carrying out the system proposed. Have gentlemen who write and talk so flippantly about the rejection or postponement of these compacts ever looked the consequences fully in the face?

If Congress shall fail at the present session to make the necessary appropriations; if for want of money, the United States agents in this country shall cease to purchase cattle from your Southern ranch-owners, flour from your importing merchants, and suspend their small but still important issues to the Indians, how long will it be before they will fly back again to their old mountain fastnesses, and under the "higher law" of necessity, commence depredations upon the immigrants, the miners, the pack trains, and the stock farms in the valleys? Then will follow alarm, consternation, immense losses by the breaking up of business, the destruction of property, and finally war "to the knife, and the knife to the hilt"—a war of extermination on the one side—on the other of bitter revenge

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property, and finally war "to the knife, and
the knife to the hilt"—a war of extermination
on the one side—on the other of bitter revenge
and undying hatred? I tell you now, sir, that
in less than sixty days from the time we cease
feeding, you must prepare for fighting them;
and no pack-train or small party will be safe on
the u. o. m. t. n. trail or in the secluded gulches
in any part of the State. Every interest must
suffer, more or less: And all this for what?
Why, that certain gentlemen in the Legislature
may make a little political capital with miners,
who, when they left home, wished to prospect or
work on some one of the reservations, but who
to-day are just as likely as not prospecting
some gully 100 miles off.

One member has told me that his opposition to
the whole system arises from the favoritism
shown by Agent Wozencraft in granting a
license to Messrs. Dent and Vantyne to trade
with the tribes on the Stanislaus, and not giv-
ing equal privileges to others, particularly his
friend in the white house on the hill! He is
down on all monopolies. Another, because there
is said to be good diggings in a gulch not more
than five or ten miles distant from one of the
reservations—in his county! Another says
there is on the reservation "in his county" land
good enough to raise vegetables, potatoes, and
cabbage, and his constituents will want all such
land for themselves. Another because an hon-
orable member of the Assembly has stated in a
solemn report that the Indian Commissioner
have given away to the Indians a large propor-
tion of all the good agricultural and mineral
lands in the State; that the Indians were al-
ready selling off these lands for a mere trifle,
not one-fifteenth part of their value, etc. An-
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with the sobriquet of "representative of the
low counties"—opposes the system, because the
Indians down south steal 20 per ct. of all the
cattle in the country. This, by an estimate
prepared for me by Senator Warner and Señor
D. n Pico, equals 72,400 head per annum (one-
fifth of 362,000). If this be so, his Indian con-
stituents are undoubtedly good stealers, as well
as remarkably fond of beef. Another excellent
gentleman in the Senate goes against our poli-
cy, because the reservation in his county was

understood to include the farm of a friend on the Merced river, which he now admits was a mistake on his part, the said farm being at least twenty miles below. Other gentlemen have assigned other reasons, doubtless equally cogent. Now what I object to, is not the discussion of our policy, or the criticism of our acts, (especially if gentlemen would only favor us by suggesting something preferable,) but that they should do us, themselves, and the whole subject an injustice by committing themselves to the enforcement of what is not only untrue, but truly ridiculous; and doing so, endanger vastly important interests—interests involving the peace of the State, the lives of hundreds or thousands of our fellow creatures, and an increase of our taxation and indebtedness, to an indefinite amount. Have gentlemen, I say, looked seriously into the consequences; or regardless of all prudential considerations determined recklessly to go on scattering firebrands, arrows and death, under the plea that it is all done to please the "dear people."

Mr. Chairman, how came the "dear people" on your frontiers to possess the right to be first pleased in this matter? Did not the Indians possess at least the usufruct, or right to live on these lands, long before we ever dreamed of employing our superior force or intelligence in dispossessing them? I am aware that our Missouri and Oregon boys are great on land. "Mineral lands free as air" and "every man a farm," sounds well just before an election, but after all it might be well to have an undoubted title. By the uniform practice of our Government, in the new States and Territories, the Indian title has first to be extinguished, purchased by treat-

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By the uniform practice of our Government
the new States and Territories, the Indian title
has first to be extinguished, purchased by treaty
and payment made, or agreed on, before the
domain passes fully even to the Government.
Till then, the lands are not liable to be squatted
on or improved. Is it not strange then, that
gentlemen professing to be acquainted with the
laws and usages of their own Government,
should interpose obstacles in the way of extinguishing
the Indian title in California; retard
the surveying of the lands, and by consequence
the settlement of the country? Yet such is the
practical effect, as I understand the case, of opposition
to these compacts. Again, have gentlemen ever taken
the trouble to read one of these compacts to learn
what right the Commissioners propose to confer upon
the Indians—what the Government proposes to do?

I will trouble the Clerk to read for the information
of the committee, the outlines of one of these treaties,
which may be taken as a sample of all. (Treaty read.)

Art. 2. Provides for the prompt delivery to the civil
authorities of the State, for trial, any person belonging
to the tribe, or harbored by it, charged with crime;
makes the chiefs responsible for stolen property, &c.

Articles 3 and 4 are as follows:
The said tribes and bands, hereby and severally, re-
linquish and forever quit-claim, to the U. S. all right,
title, claims to, or interest of any kind they or any of
them have now, or ever had, in and to lands or soil in
California.

To promote the settlement and comfort of said tribes,
it is hereby agreed by the Commissioners, in behalf of
the U. S., that the following tract of land shall be laid off
and appropriated for the residence of said tribes or
bands and their successors, to-wit: Beginning at, &c.
Which land is hereby set apart, and the use and occu-
pancy thereof together with that of the river on which
the same is situated, forever guaranteed to the said tribes
and their successors, while they make it their permanent
residence, and maintain inviolate the terms of this treaty.
It is understood that the U. S. reserve the right to
establish upon any part of said land such military posts,
and buildings, for their agents or other officers, as the
President may direct; and also that the said tribes
shall never sell or dispose of their right or claim to any
part thereof, except to the U. S.; nor shall they ever

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To promote the settlement and civilization
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ty. It is understood that the U. S. reserve the right to
establish upon any part of said land such military posts,
and buildings, for their agents or other officers, as the
President may direct; and also that the said tribes
shall never sell or dispose of their right or claim to any
part thereof, except to the U. S.; nor shall they ever
lease or permit white men to settle, work, cultivate or
trade on any part of the same, without the written per-
mission of the Indian Agent of the district.

Gentlemen can now see how those have disre-
garded the 9th commandment, who for months
past have been representing that our grants of
land to the Indians were in fee simple, confer-
ring upon them rights they never enjoyed under
the Mexican government; creating independent
communities in the heart of the State, which the
State laws could not control, &c. &c.

[CONCLUSION TO-MORROW.]

DAY UNION

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