

NUMBER XVII.

A Memorial of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Minnesota to the Congress of the United States Relative to Granting the Right of Citizenship to Certain Indians.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress Assembled: The Memorial of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Minnesota respectfully represents:

For granting the
right of citi-
zenship to In-
dians

That through the influence of Missionaries and intercourse with the whites, Indians are from time to time withdrawing from aboriginal habits, and not only assume the dress but the mode of life of the whites.

That under existing laws there is no adequate means for making that permanent and complete change in the condition of those Indians, necessary to lead them to become useful citizens, or to induce others to follow in their footsteps.

That by granting the right of citizenship to all such as, by the change in their habits and mode of life, may merit such privilege, a great step would be gained in the progress of the tribes around us, in the path of civilization.

That no moral change which may be wrought in an Indian under our present system, can affect a political change in their condition. An Indian, although he may have abandoned his tribe, assumed the dress of the white man, and by his industry has opened himself a farm, cannot, under our laws at present, obtain a title to that farm, or enjoy any of the many franchises and privileges which his mode of life and knowledge of our institutions should secure to him. He, therefore, by becoming in feeling and habit a white man, loses his position in his tribe, while he gains no political rights under our laws.

Your Memorialists would therefore respectfully urge your Honorable Bodies, the necessity of the passage of a law which would enable the Territorial Legislature to confer upon such Indians as may from time to time assume the habits of the whites, all the rights, privileges, and immunities which are enjoyed by any other citizen. This would enable the Legislature to discriminate between those who have, and those who have not sufficiently advanced in the scale of civilization to be entitled to enjoy the rights of citizenship within the limits of our Territory.

And, as in duty bound, your Memorialists will ever pray.

CHARLES GARDNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

JOHN B. BRISBIN,

President of the Council.

APPROVED—February eighteenth, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-six.

W. A. GORMAN.

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a correct copy of the original Memorial on file in this office.

J. TRAVIS ROESER,

Secretary of Minnesota Territory.