

Copy

To Mr. Orr Feb. 8, 1839

G.M.H.

D.R.

#544

Park Hill, Feb. 8th, 1839

Mr. James Orr,

Dear brother,

Seldom have I been so much astonished as by the intelligence contained in you letter of the 5th Inst. received last night. You ask whether I did indeed advise Mr. Boudinott or Ridge to head a party and form a treaty. I suppose you ask it merely that you may have my answer in black & white; for I think you must have heard me express my views on the subject by word of mouth. Well you shall have my answer on paper. So far from having ever given any such advice, I have always & uniformly, from the first to the last to friend or foe, to those concerned & to those not concerned, distinctly and decidedly express my disapprobation of such a course.

Some part of the error, I think, must consist in Dr. Palmer's misunderstanding of Dr. Butler's words. The advice is said to have been given "When the National Council refused to treat with Schermurhorn". Now Dr. Butler can hardly have so forgotten dates, as not to remember that I had left the old Nation for Arkansas before Schermurhorn arrived there. He must know well that I never saw the face of either Boudinott or Ridge from before the time of Schermurhorn's first proposition to the National Council till after the ratification of the party treaty. Dr. Butler, too, it is said, heard me say it; where as I have never seen Dr. Butler's face from before Mr. Schermurhorn's arrival in the Old Nation to the present day, so far, then, as dates are concerned, Dr. Palmer must have misunderstood Dr. Butler.

As to the rest, Dr. Butler may, at some former period, have heard me say something, which he may have construed into advice that a treaty should be formed by a party; but it must have been a very gross, and would appear to me a very strange misconstruction. Mrs. Boudinott informs me that once, in her presence, on occasion of a letter being read in which I had expressed my disapprobation of what Mr. Boudinott had done, in signing the treaty, Dr. Butler wondered that Mr. Worcester could say so when he had heard him say to Mr. Boudinott, "Cannot you get your people together and persuade them to remove?!" and that she laboured in vain to convince him, that, even if I did say that, it did not amount to advising Mr. Boudinott to endeavour to form a party treaty, whether or not I ever said any thing to that effect to Mr. Boudinott either in Dr. Butler's presence or out of it, I did not recollect. Two things I know. First, that even after I became convinced that the decision of the Supreme Court, which Dr. Butler & I had obtained, would avail nothing for the protection of the Cherokees, I did wish that the nation could be brought to see it to be their interest to remove, secondly, that I always, from the very first suggestion of the idea, most earnestly deprecated the bringing about of that removal by means of a treaty to be formed by a minority, or by any other than properly authorized persons.

The following extract of a letter from me to Mr. Boudinott, written after the ratification of the treaty, will sufficiently explain my views.

Illinois Dec. 17th, 1836

In relation to the course you have taken in forming the late treaty, I hardly know what to say, or whether to say any thing at all, as you do not profess to have given me a full view of your reasons, but reserve them in part until we meet. As, however, you will perhaps be somewhat interested to know what my opinion is, and will be likely to hear at least or surmiss from other sources which will of course be less satisfactory than the direct expression of my own views, it may possibly be well for me to state my present impressions. And leave them to be corrected, if need be, by your future statements. So far, then, as your motives and objects are concerned, I have the fullest conviction of the uprightness of your intentions, and the sincerety of your aim to promote the best interests of your people. Yet of the correctness of the course itself, so far as you have yet exhibited your reasons, I cannot say that they have satisfied my mind. The substance of your reasons, so far as stated, appears to be, that the end was of vast importance, and the means were the only means by which it could be effected, I suppose that however painful to patriotic and benevolent feeling the thought of relinquishing it, yet it must or ought to be relinquished, unless it can be accomplished by lawful means. The part, therefore, which remains to be filled up in your argument, so far as I perceive, is to show the lawfulness of the means. This, I must confess, I do not perceive. If you show this, it is all that needs to be shown.

It may be sufficient to add, that Mr. Boudinott has not been able, by subsequent arguments, to convince me of the lawfulness of the means used; so that I remain of the same mind.

You are at liberty to use this letter as the defence of truth may seem to require.

Your Brother in Christ

S. A. Worcester

I have seen a letter of Mr. James Orr, in which it contained a statement made by Dr. Butler to Dr. Palmer, that he, Dr. Butler heard the Rev'd S. A. Worcester advise me Boudinott or Mr. Ridge to head a party and form a treaty, or do anything tending thereto;---and that, in all my conversations & correspondence with him, touching the situation of the Cherokees, from my first acquaintance with him to this present time, he has never used language that I could, by any forced construction, interpret as containing such advice.

Park Hill Cher-Nation  
Feb. 11, 1839

Elias Boudinott