FORT LARAMIE TREATY OF 1851

The treaty between the United States and northern Plains tribes signed in 1851 at Fort Laramie, in southeastern Wyoming, had as its objectives peace between Indians and whites as well as intertribal peace among the Indian signatories. Prior to the treaty, Indians had protested against the tide of settlers who passed through their lands on the trail to Oregon and California. They raided and stole from the wagon trains in frustration over the decimation of game along the trail and the frequent introduction of diseases among their populations.

During the summer of 1851, approximately ten thousand Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Crow, Shoshone, Assiniboine, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara representatives met in the greatest council in recorded history--on surprisingly peaceful terms. On September 8, after much fanfare and pageantry and days of discussions with the treaty commission and among themselves, the chiefs signed the treaty. Under its terms, the Indians guaranteed safe passage for westward-bound settlers along the Platte River, and the chiefs accepted responsibility for the behavior of their followers in specified territories. In return, the government promised annuity goods worth fifty thousand dollars

each year for fifty years. Congress later cut appropriations for the treaty to ten years' annuities, and several tribes never received the commodities promised them. Although the treaty produced a brief period of peace, rivalry among tribes, the fluidity of Plains societies, and the persistent growth of American emigration soon rendered the agreement moot.

Treaty of Fort Laramie (1851). (1996). In *Encyclopedia of North American Indians (Houghton Mifflin)* (p. 646). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

FORT LARAMIE TREATY OF 1868

An agreement made by the United States with several bands of Sioux (the Brulés, Oglalas, Miniconjous, Yanktonais, Hunkpapas, Blackfeet, Cutheads, Two Kettles, Sans Arcs, and Santees) and Arapahos, the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie brought temporary peace to the northern plains following "Red Cloud's War" of 1866-68.

Fighting had broken out along the Bozeman Trail in 1866. The Bozeman carried gold seekers from the Oregon Trail in southern Oregon to the mines near the Continental Divide. Teton Sioux bands under Red Cloud and Crazy Horse claimed to control the Bighorn region and pledged to drive out anyone who challenged them. In 1866 the U.S. Army erected several forts to defend the trail, but these were quickly surrounded by well-armed warriors. In December of that year at one such garrison, Fort Phil Kearny, near modern-day Sheridan, Wyoming, a war party under Crazy Horse wiped out a detachment of eighty soldiers who had ridden out to pursue them. In the ensuing panic Congress established a Peace Commission to negotiate a settlement with the region's tribes.

Set up in July 1867, the commission was led by the Civil War hero William Tecumseh Sherman and populated with politicians and Christian reformers such as John T. Sanborn and Samuel F. Tappan. It invited friendly Indian leaders to assemble at Fort Laramie, in southeastern Wyoming, in spring 1868. A single session had been envisioned, but by the end of the year three separate treaty negotiations had taken place. In April and May, Spotted Tail of the Brulés and American Horse of the Oglalas came to Fort Laramie and signed the agreement, but other Sioux leaders stayed away. In July the commission met with Hunkpapa, Blackfoot, Two Kettle, Sans Arc, and Miniconjou leaders aboard the steamboat Agnes on the Missouri River. The spring agreement was approved by these chiefs and a new provision was added: the government would abandon its Bozeman Trail posts. The order to disband the forts was given in September. Finally, on November 6, Red Cloud and his followers appeared at Fort Laramie and added their consent to the document. Congress ratified the treaty on February 16, 1869.

The 1868 treaty had four parts. The first pledged both sides to peace. The second reserved the area west of the Missouri River and east of the Rockies for the "absolute and undisturbed use" of the Sioux. The third and longest section described several mechanisms by which the government would support the tribes: it would establish schools, provide seed and clothing for Indian

farmers, and set up agencies for the distribution of aid. The treaty further stipulated that no revisions would be made in the agreement without the approval of three-quarters of the adult males of the tribe. Finally, the treaty recognized the Bozeman Trail area as "unceded Indian territory" where whites would not be allowed to settle and within which there would be no military posts.

Because the 1868 Fort Laramie treaty tacitly recognized Sioux power in the Bighorn region, it was viewed by war leaders like Red Cloud as a ratification of their victory over the United States. At the same time, the agreement's extensive provisions for government assistance to those who settled on the new Sioux reservation and took up farming satisfied government officials that the Sioux would soon be "pacified." These divergent views underlay conflicts between the Sioux and the United States until the Battle of the Little Bighorn eight years later. A much longer dispute would surround the treaty's "three-fourths rule" regarding future changes. Congressional leaders would insist that the government was not perpetually bound by it, whereas tribal officials would argue for decades to come that this provision was a continual mark of tribal sovereignty and an ongoing bar to federal power over the tribes.

Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868). (1996). In *Encyclopedia of North American Indians (Houghton Mifflin)* (p. 647). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

DAWES ACT

Named for its sponsor, Massachusetts senator Henry L. Dawes, the Dawes Act or General Allotment Act of 1887 attempted to establish private ownership of Indian lands by initiating government partitions of reservations. Under the act, each Indian family head was to receive 160 acres, and all other individuals over the age of eighteen were to receive 80 acres each. Individuals would be allowed to select their allotments, but a tribe that had been marked by the Indian Office for allotment could not stop the process. Subsequent amendments gave the secretary of the interior the authority to sell or lease these allotted lands. The allotment process began soon after the passage of the act and continued until it was formally ended by the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act.

The Dawes Act reflected both the assimilationist tone of the late nineteenth century and non-Indians' belief in the "civilizing" power of land ownership. Although not all tribes and reservations came under the jurisdiction of the act, the allotment process deprived Indian people of more than 90 million acres of land--or around two-thirds of their total land base.

Dawes Act. (1996). In *Encyclopedia of North American Indians (Houghton Mifflin)* (p. 154). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

TERMINATION ACT

The word termination describes U.S. policy toward Native Americans during the 1950s and 1960s. Reacting to Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier's policy of cultural pluralism and the Indian New Deal (1934-1945), conservative congressmen led by westerners such as Utah senator Arthur Watkins sought to "emancipate the Indian" by terminating federal ties to Indian communities and withdrawing federal support for tribal governments. House Concurrent Resolution no. 108, sponsored by Watkins, was adopted on August 1, 1953, to codify federal policy. It called for Congress to initiate sixty separate termination bills, the last in 1962. Generally, the statutes called for the preparation of a final roll of tribal members, the distribution of tribal assets to members, and the removal of Indian lands from federally protected trust status. Implementation was to take from two to five years to complete.

Among the groups affected by this policy were the Menominees of Wisconsin, the Klamaths and other, smaller tribes in Oregon, the Ute and Paiute Indians of Utah, and the Alabama-Coushattas of Texas. Termination undermined health and economic conditions and accelerated the decline of traditional cultural practices. In the wake of these negative outcomes, several tribes

have campaigned successfully to reverse their termination. These include the Menominees, the Klamaths, the Oregon Siletzes, and the Alabama-Coushattas.

TERMINATION. (1996). In *Encyclopedia of North American Indians (Houghton Mifflin)* (p. 625). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.