

**FURTHER PROCEEDINGS OF THE JOINT
COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY OF
FRIENDS: CONSTITUTING THE YEARLY MEETINGS
OF GENESSEE, NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA AND
BALTIMORE, FOR PROMOTING THE
CIVILIZATION AND IMPROVING THE CONDITION
OF THE SENECA NATION OF INDIANS**

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Further Proceedings of the Joint Committee Appointed by the Society of Friends: Constituting the Yearly Meetings of Genesee, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, for Promoting the Civilization and Improving the Condition of the Seneca Nation of Indians by Various

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VARIOUS

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FURTHER PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE

APPOINTED BY THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

CONSTITUTING THE YEARLY MEETINGS

OF

**GENESSEE, NEW YORK,
PHILADELPHIA AND BALTIMORE.**

FOR PROMOTING THE CIVILIZATION
AND IMPROVING THE CONDITION,

OF THE

SENECA NATION OF INDIANS,

From the year 1847 to the year 1850.

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FURTHER PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
JOINT COMMITTEE
FOR IMPROVING THE CONDITION
OF THE
SENECA INDIANS.

In the year 1847 the Committees of the four Yearly Meetings of Genessee, New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, published some account of their proceedings for promoting the civilization and improvement of the Seneca Nation of Indians. In that work the Committees expressed their hope that in a little time these people might be able to manage their own affairs without much assistance from Friends. Believing that the time so anticipated had arrived, the Committees in the Tenth month last, so far closed their labours amongst these Indians as to lay down their Manual-labour School, at Cattaraugus, and to surrender to the Government of the Seneca Nation, the Lease for the Land granted to Friends some years ago, for our accommodation whilst prosecuting this object.

With a view that Friends who have been concerned for the welfare of the natives of our Country, and particularly that the members of the four Yearly Meetings we represent, may be fully informed on the subject, so far as their Committees are concerned, we have thought it right to present them with a narrative of our proceedings, from the date of our last publication, together with some remarks and Official Documents necessary to give the reader a clear view of the present situation of the Seneca Indians, at Alleghany and Cattaraugus.

Since the time of that publication, the Seneca Nation has made a *radical change* in the form of its Government. This might have been anticipated, as a necessary consequence of the onward progress of their people, in the career of improve-

ment. But that progress had been more rapid, than their friends, who were actively engaged in promoting it, had expected. In order to explain the late movements of the Seneca nation, it will be necessary to review the previous state of that people, and the changes to which they have been subjected, by the various and powerful influences of Civilization pressing on them throughout all their borders.

Before the arrival of Europeans in America, and, indeed, until within a very few years past, the Indian tribes on this Continent were governed by Chiefs, chosen by the Clans, and formally installed by the Nation, in a general Council held for that purpose. From the little known of them in their original state, it appears that their Government was only adapted to a very simple condition of Society. Their lands were held *in common*; every individual in the nation without distinction or exception having equal rights in them; (See app. doc. 6) of course they required no laws to regulate titles to Real Estate, or prevent fraudulent conveyances;—they held very little *personal* property, and that little, from the force of the moral feelings; in their inartificial state, was safe in the bosom of society, without lock or key. There was no *coercive power* vested in their Chiefs. They had no jails, gibbets, nor penitentiaries;—no Constables nor Sheriffs. Parental authority, in our sense of that term, was unknown, or rested on persuasion. Obedience was prompted more by kindness than punishment. In fine their Government was based *on feeling, not on force*; and therefore was unsuited to a state of Society, in which all the passions and propensities of our Nature are fully developed, but not fully brought under the restraints of religious principle. As the Senecas advanced from barbarism toward civilization, their Government failed to answer the purposes of a government. Formerly the Chiefs held no more property than the poorest individual in the nation. Their authority resting on their popularity alone; there was then no danger of any abuse of power. But when, by the accumulation of wealth, or the amount of a bribe, a Chief could set a

poor brother at defiance ;—when, regardless of his prayers and remonstrances, he could sell him out of house and home, then, the signs of the times plainly pointed to a Government of Laws, a government founded in a power stronger than the will of individuals. That the Seneca Nation, suffering as it had done, within the past ten years, by the sordid baseness of its Chiefs, should move for a change of Government, is no matter of wonder, and, perhaps we ought not to be astonished, that these very Chiefs should now struggle so hard to retain the power they have so shamefully abused.

Much misapprehension has prevailed in relation to the Indian mode of deciding on subjects, coming before them in Council. The decision by *majorities* is so familiar to civilized nations, that it has been easy to make, both our Citizens and our Government believe, that it was also recognized by the natives. But this is a mistake,—and has been one of the great causes of Indian wrongs. Our Government acted on this erroneous assumption, in their negotiations with the fraudulent Chiefs in relation to the treaty of 1838. John C. Spencer, late Secretary of War, gave an opinion of great weight on this point, from his intimate knowledge of the Indians, and their customs. (See app. doc. A.) That Opinion was given to a Committee of the New York Legislature on Indian affairs in 1845, when the Ogden Land Company were opposing a Bill, then before the Senate, for the protection of the Seneca Nation. He says, “It is intimated in the Memorial of Mr. Fellows, (the Agent of the Company,) that the usual mode of purchasing or extinguishing the Indian title, has been by treaty at a Council, at which a *majority* of those present controlled.” After expressing his dissent from the truth of this statement, that distinguished jurist further says “On the face of Contracts formerly made with the Indians under treaties, it would appear that they expressed the *United Sentiment of the Nation*. The Chiefs signed as *representatives*,—*delegates*; expressing the sense of *their whole nation*,—and *not individually*. It is doubted whether the Indians have known or been governed by the

majority rule, and it is believed that in their deliberations they have endeavored to ascertain the *general sense* of their Councils, and when ascertained, it become the *unanimous and united sense*."

Formerly the Indians of North America more nearly resembled the Society of Friends in their mode of deciding on subjects of deliberation, than any other people. *Majorities* may be in error. *Their decision* may infringe on the rights of a very large part of any community, and break the harmony of the whole. Necessity may force us in some cases to resort to that mode of settling a question, but patience and moderation will often point out a more excellent way; and *that way* had been always the way of the Seneca nation.

But the treaty of 1838, had not even the benefit of the "*Majority Rule*," and the Chiefs who signed it were guilty of a fraud, in assuming that a *majority* of their number had a *right* to convey to the Ogden Company the Real Estate of the nation. The whole number of Chiefs as claimed by both parties was 91. If every one of these Chiefs had signed that treaty in any other capacity than as *delegates*, under the authority of the Nation in full Council assembled, it had been a fraud. But what are we to think of this treaty or the parties to it, when it is known that a *minority only signed it*, (See app. doc. B,)—that they signed it *without any authority*, and under the influence of *enormous bribes!* (See app. doc. C, D, E.)

The depravity of these Chiefs will appear in a very strong light, when it is considered, that, out of the whole population of the Seneca nation, amounting, at that time, to 2505 persons, only 146 individuals, including women and children, were in favour of emigration. (See app. doc. F.) The bribed Chiefs were perfectly aware of that fact;—they knew it, as well as they could know any thing;—they knew, that by the act of signing the treaty, they were doing all they could, to drive 2359 of their people into the wilderness, *against their will!* We would not charge these delinquent Chiefs with greater wickedness than they are justly entitled to. We are willing to

admit the plea of *ignorance, of intellectual obtusity, of blindness*, to any extent which truth may demand. But after making every deduction which the warmest Charity can suggest, we are left to the conclusion that nothing short of a *crusé, deliberate fraud*, was intended, and consummated, so far as their power extended, in the signing of that treaty.

When we consider, that some of the prominent men of the Seneca nation, have had the benefits of a liberal education, and many of them, by frequent intercourse with their more enlightened neighbours, and by reading and reflection, have been qualified to consider and comprehend the nature of civil government,—to understand that it is an institution, whose primary object it is, to protect *the weak* against *the strong*; it is no cause of wonder that *they* should wish to be disenthralled from the dominion of *Chiefs*, who had shewn so little regard to the rights and feelings of their people.

In less than three years after the two Reservations (lost to them by the treaty of 1838) had been restored, the mass of the people at Cattaraugus and Allegany, manifested great uneasiness, lest, *again*, these remnants of their lands, might be wrongfully wrested from them. Under these fears they petitioned the Legislature of New York, for a law, to protect them from the frauds of their own Chiefs; thus, presenting to the world, the curious spectacle of a nation seeking from a foreign state, a security against the officers of its own government!

In their petition they pathetically implore the intervention of the legislature, begging them to save them from the power of their rulers! We cannot convey to the reader a more correct, or a more feeling description, of the tried state of this distressed people, than by presenting him with it, in their own language. The following extracts from that petition, will answer our purpose on this occasion.

"To the Legislature of the State of New York,—

"The Petition of the Seneca nation of Indians, respectfully represents,

"That the Seneca nation, once the powerful and courted ally of sovereign nations, have dwindled away into a weak band, depending for its very existence upon the protection of the General Government, and of the State of New York. Their lands, too, have been torn away from them, and they stand now, only upon four insignificant parcels, of the broad territory, they once covered with their people. Of these four Reservations, two, and the best two, they are told, have been *sold by their Chiefs*, to the Ogden Company, and the Allegany and Cattaraugus Reservations, yielding each individual of their nation, scarcely twenty-five acres a piece, are the last of their possessions.

"You are the guardians of our nation. Consider our condition, and protect and shelter us. The Great Spirit made the *red man*, as well as the *white man*,—we are brothers. The Great Spirit looks down upon the world. He will ask you, 'Where is your weak red brother, whom I put into your hands, that you might guide and guard him?'

"We are failing fast, we can find no safety, unless it be under the shadow of your laws. Our old men have thought deeply,—they tell us so.

"We are poor and ignorant. We know not what will be good for us.—We ask you to think for us, and act for us. We will tell you our griefs and our fears. We wish to live in this land, once all our own, near our white friends, who will be the friends of our children; that they who come after us, may look out from the dark places into which we have been driven, and bring in the lights of the wise men—morality,—learning,—industry,—and the arts, that they may become white in soul, and your people and our people become one.

"Let not our lands be taken from us. If our chiefs can sell our lands, the white buyer, [the agents of Ogden Land Company,] will come to the edge of our Reservations, with *money and whiskey, and promises of lands*, and will call over *the Chiefs*, one by one, and talk with them, and there will be a council, and a long talk;—and when the council has broken up, chief after chief