

THE CONTINUING CONFLICT OVER LAND

In 1791, warriors of the northwestern Indian confederacy, led by the Miami war chief Little Turtle and the Shawnee Blue Jacket, inflicted a smashing defeat on the United States, destroying an American army under General Arthur St. Clair, governor of the Northwest Territory. In the wake of that defeat the United States dispatched commissioners to meet with the Indians and negotiate a settlement, but the Americans would not agree to the Indian demand that the Ohio River remain the boundary to their lands.

In a general council held at the foot of the Miami Rapids in northwestern Ohio in August 1793, delegates from the Wyandots, Seven Nations of Canada,³ Delawares, Shawnees, Miamis, Ottawas, Chippewas, Senecas, Potawatomis, Conoys, Munsees, Nanticokes, Mahicans, Mississaguas, Creeks, and Cherokees met with the American commissioners. The Indian speakers reviewed the history of their relations with the United States, showing how past treaties had failed to stop white expansion onto their lands, and then offered their own solution to the problem.

INDIAN REPRESENTATIVES

Proposal to Maintain Indian Lands

1793

Brothers;—

Money, to us, is of no value, & to most of us unknown, and as no consideration whatever can induce us to sell the lands on which we get sustenance for our women and children; we hope we may be allowed to point out a mode by which your settlers may be easily removed, and peace thereby obtained.

Brothers;—

We know that these settlers are poor, or they would never have ventured to live in a country which have been in continual trouble ever since they crossed the Ohio; divide therefore this large sum of money which you have

E. A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe*, 5 vols. (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923-31) 2:17-19.

offered to us, among these people, give to each also a portion of what you say you would give us annually over and above this very large sum of money, and we are persuaded they would most readily accept of it in lieu of the lands you sold to them, if you add also the great sums you must expend in raising and paying Armies, with a view to force us to yield you our Country, you will certainly have more than sufficient for the purposes of repaying these settlers for all their labour and improvements.

Brothers;—

You have talked to us about concessions. It appears strange that you should expect any from us, who have only been defending our just Rights against your invasion; We want Peace; Restore to us our Country and we shall be Enemies no longer.

Brothers;—

You make one concession to us, by offering us your money, and another by having agreed to do us justice, after having long and injuriously withheld it. We mean in the acknowledgement you have now made, that the King of England never did, nor never had a right, to give you our Country, by the Treaty of peace, and you want to make this act of Common Justice, a great part of your concessions, and seem to expect that because you have at last acknowledged our independence, we should for such a favor surrender to you our Country.

Brothers;—

You have talked also a great deal about pre-emption and your exclusive right to purchase Indian lands, as ceded to you by the King at the Treaty of peace.

Brothers;—

We never made any agreement with the King, nor with any other Nation that we would give to either the exclusive right of purchasing our lands. And we declare to you that we consider ourselves free to make any bargain or cession of lands, whenever & to whomsoever we please, if the white people as you say, made a treaty that none of them but the King should purchase of us, and that he has given that right to the U. States, it is an affair which concerns you & him & not us. We have never parted with such a power.

Brothers;—

At our General Council held at the Glaize⁴ last Fall, we agreed to meet Commissioners from the U. States, for the purpose of restoring Peace, provided they consented to acknowledge and confirm our boundary line to be

the Ohio; and we determined not to meet you until you gave us satisfaction on that point; that is the reason we have never met.

We desire you to consider Brothers, that our only demand, is the peaceable possession of a small part of our once great Country. Look back and view the lands from whence we have been driven to this spot, we can retreat no further, because the country behind hardly affords food for its present inhabitants. And we have therefore resolved, to leave our bones in this small space, to which we are now confined.

Brothers;—

We shall be persuaded that you mean to do us justice if you agree, that the Ohio, shall remain the boundary line between us, if you will not consent thereto, our meeting will be altogether unnecessary.

NOTES

¹Lawrence J. Kinnaird, ed., *Spain in the Mississippi Valley*, Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1945 (Washington, D.C.), vol. 3, pt. 2, 117.

²*Calendar of Virginia State Papers* 4 (1886): 306.

³The Seven Nations of Canada was a confederacy of the mission communities along the St. Lawrence River. Centered at Caughnawaga, it included Oka, Odanak, Akwesasne, and other groups.

⁴The Glaize was the area at the junction of the Auglaize and Maumee rivers in northwestern Ohio. By this time many Indian peoples had congregated in the region as American expansion pushed them from their traditional homelands.