

# The Effects of the Committee for Indian Affairs on Tribal Sovereignty

## Placard 6

### ***From the Library of Congress' Learning Page:***

*American-Indian relations were generally not good over the course of British colonization of North America. Recall that the reason for the British Proclamation of 1763 was conflict over settlement in the lands west of the Allegheny Mountains, which the British wanted to stop...After war broke out between the British and Americans, Indian tribes were in a quandary as to which side, if either, to take. Although some tribes did take sides, most attempted to sit out the Revolutionary War. Even so, Indian relations were ever on the minds of patriot leaders. One of the first acts of the Continental Congress was the creation, in 1775, of three departments of Indian affairs; northern, central, and southern. Among the first departmental commissioners were Benjamin Franklin and Patrick Henry. Their job was to negotiate treaties with tribes and obtain tribal neutrality in the coming Revolutionary War. Fourteen years later, the U. S. Congress established a War Department and made Indian relations a part of its responsibilities.*

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Taken from the Notes on the Committee for Indian Affairs, September 19, 1776

"The Committee for Indian Affairs brought in a report, which was taken into consideration; Whereupon. . .

"That the commanding officers of the several posts, on the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania, be desired to give the earliest intelligence they can, of every important occurrence they may have notice of, respecting the Indians, to the commissioners, or, when they are not in the way, to the agent for Indian Affairs:

"That it be recommended to the inhabitants of the frontiers, and to the officers at all the posts there, to treat the Indians, who behave peaceably and inoffensively, with kindness and civility, and not to suffer them to be ill used or insulted..."

Taken from Notes on Congress Considers the Report of the Special Committee, November 20, 1777

That an inroad has been made on the western frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania, by some savage tribes of Indians, wherein a number of helpless people have been cruelly massacred, and the peaceable inhabitants driven from their homes and reduced to great distress:

"...appears that these savages have been instigated by British agents and emissaries . . . to this barbarous and murderous war.

"That the Shawanese and Delaware Indians continue...to preserve the league of peace and amity entered into with us; for which reason they are threatened with an attack by their hostile neighbours who have invaded us...

"That the said commissioners be directed to cultivate the friendship of the Shawanese and Delawares, and prevent our people from committing any outrages against them:

"That they be empowered to engage as many of the Delaware and Shawanese warriors in the service of the United States as they judge convenient..."

<http://rs6.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/amrev/homefrnt/savages.html>

### **Be The Expert:**

- 1. How has Congress' attitude toward Indian neutrality changed?**
- 2. What language does the Committee use that indicates how they feel toward Indian nations?**
- 3. How does the decision of the Congress to try to get the Delaware and the "Shawanese" (Shawnees) to fight for the United States affect other tribal nations' sovereignty? Their attitudes toward the United States?**