

## INSTRUCTIONS TO CONRAD WEISER

### INSTRUCTIONS TO CONRAD WEISER, ESQ.,\* INTERPRETER FOR THE PROVINCE OF PENNSYLVANIA, FROM ANTHONY PALMER, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL.

Sir: – This government having promised the Indians, who came here from Ohio in November last (1747), to send you to them in early spring, and having provided a present of considerable value, you are to proceed thither with all possible dispatch. Mr. George Croghan, the Indian trader, who is well acquainted in the Indian country, and the best roads to Ohio, has undertaken this convoy of you and the goods with his own men and horses at the public expense; and as it cannot be foreseen how long the journey will take him, nor what trouble may attend it, so as to enter into contracts before hand with him, all affairs relating thereto are entirely left to you, wherein we recommend all the frugality that can consistently with the nature of your business, the treasury being low and a large sum expended in the purchase of the present, be practiced.

As soon as you come to the place of general rendezvous, you are to notify your arrival in a speech to all the tribes, wherein you are to deal in *generals*, reserving all particular matter to your closing speech.

You are to use the utmost diligence to acquire a perfect knowledge of the number, situation, disposition and strength of all the Indians in or near those parts, whether they can be friends, neutrals or enemies, and be very particular in knowing the temper and influence of the tribes of Indians who send deputies to receive you; for by the knowledge of these matters you are to regulate the distribution of the goods which are to be divided amongst them in as equal and just a manner as possible, that all may go away satisfied, and none receive the least cause of disgust at any undue preference given to others.

You cannot be at a loss for matter from whence to form your speeches. The ancient enmity of the French to the Indian nations, their perfidy upon all occasions, of which, if any reliance can be held on the articles of news in the public papers, you may give some late instances in the death of Taghananty, the Black Prince, who perished in a jail at Montreal, and in the cruel treatment of the Indians in general at Canada, who are confined to loathsome prisons without proper or wholesome sustenance.

The inability of the French to protect the Indians, or to supply them with such necessaries as they stand in need of for their subsistence are well known. These observations are what cannot occur to you. You may further enlarge on the constant and ancient friendship of the English, and their readiness at all times to assist them against the attempts of the French who have ever been for destroying or enslaving them.

And an ample field will be furnished to you in doing justice to this province, which has ever shown the greatest readiness to supply the Indians in the most pressing necessities, mentioning the several valuable presents made them from time to time, particularly since the commencement of the present war, instancing the Government's presents at Philadelphia, over and above the price of their lands in the year 1742; the large presents at Lancaster and at Albany; and then the present occasion will bear a particular enlargement: this Government having no sooner heard of the distresses of the Indians, and that abundance of families and young warriors had for the convenience of hunting removed to the waters of Ohio and Lake Erie, than they

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\* Conrad Weiser, whose name is intimately associated with the early history of Pennsylvania, and from whom descended some of the most useful men of the country (the Muhlenburgs), was a native of Herenberg, Germany. He was born November 2d, 1696. His father, John Conrad Weiser, with ten of his children, immigrated to America, arrived at New York in June, 1710, and shortly afterwards settled in Schoharie, where he was repeatedly visited by Quagnant, a chief of the Mohawk Nation. At the earnest solicitations of Quagnant, Conrad, the subject of this notice, went to the chief of his country, to acquire a knowledge of the Mohawk language. During his stay he endured many hardships, and suffered great privations. Having mastered the language, he returned to his father's house, and was occasionally employed as interpreter. In 1729, then married, he came with his wife and five children to Pennsylvania, settled in the Tulpehocken Valley, located half a mile east of the present site of Womelsdorf, Berks county. Conrad Weiser, as occasion demanded, acted in various capabilities, both private and public. Determined, on his arrival in Pennsylvania, to spend the remaining days of his eventful life on his farm; his talents, however, soon attracted attention. Governor Gordon, as early as 1731, required his service in the capacity of an interpreter. Soon afterwards Governor Thomas appointed him a justice of the peace; and when the French war commenced, Governor Morris commissioned him as colonel of a regiment of volunteers of Berks county. He spent more than a quarter of a century in the service of his country. He closed his eventful life July 13, 1760. For a detailed account of this truly great man see *History of Berks County*, pages 195-222.

determined to send them a supply of goods and powder, which, at this time of scarcity, they could have from no other place. The tenderness for those who, out of every nation, had come and fixed their habitations in these parts, must needs make deep impressions on their affections, and especially on the minds of their young people, to the advantage of the kindness of this province for all the Indians.

By the treaties existing between his Majesty's subjects and the Indian nations, they are laid under the strongest obligations to give each other, the earliest intelligence of whatever may affect their persons or their properties. In discharge of your duty, you are to inform the Indians that the management of the war being committed to the Governors of New York and Boston, the operations of this year are concerted by them; that they have received orders from his Majesty exceedingly favorable to the Indians, and in pursuance thereof, they will prosecute the war against the French and their adherents with the utmost vigor; that his Majesty, in token of his regard to the Indian nations, has sent a large present to the Governor of New York, to be distributed as Albany; but, that as by their distance from this place, the Indians in Ohio and Lake Erie may be supposed not to receive much benefit from the Albany present. This is an additional consideration why this government chooses to be kind to those Indians, and assist them the readier when they are in distress, because they cannot, without extreme difficulty, get supplies from other places.

On the other hand, you are to use all means in your power to get from them all kinds of intelligence as to what the French are doing, or design to do, in these parts, and indeed, in every other place. You are not to satisfy yourself with the generals, but to inform yourself *truly and fully of the real disposition* of these Indians, and what dependence can be had on them for the security of this province, and for the total prevention of all hostilities within our limits. You are to make particular inquiry into the number and situation of the Indian Nation, between these peoples settlements on the Ohio and the river Mississippi, and to the west of Lake Erie, since it is said there are several Indian Nations within these limits, and on the Lakes Huron and Illinois, who are disobliged with the French, and might easily be brought into the amity of the English.

You will see by the Assembly's answer to the council's message, a copy whereof will be given you herewith, what sentiments they entertain about war; and, as they have the disposal of public money, it would be wrong to urge the Indians to war, since no dependence could be had on the Assembly to support them in such an undertaking; and, consequently, any encouragement of this kind would be to bring them into a snare, and in the end might prove extremely hurtful. This considered, nothing of the kind must be urged by you; and if the Indians mention it themselves, you need not be explicit. You are to tell them that this point is not in your instructions, that your business was to make them a visit, and to be truly informed of their situation, and to bring them a valuable present, the most substantial mark that can be given of the great affection which this province bears to their friends, the Indians; and if they insist any further, you are to tell them that at their instance you will make a faithful relation of everything given you, by them, in charge to the government, and transmit it to the Indians their resolves. But whatever you do on this head, as a good deal must be left to your discretion and judgment, on such information as shall be given you, you are to take special care not to disoblige the Indians, or in any way diminish their heartiness for his Majesty's cause against the French.

You are to make particular inquiry in the behavior of the Shawanese, since the commencement of the war, and in relation to the countenance they gave to Peter Chartier. It is proper to tell you that they relented, made acknowledgement of their error, in being seduced by Peter Chartier, and prayed they might be permitted to return to their old town and be taken again as sincere penitents into the favor of the government; and though the Governor gave them assurances that all past misbehavior should be pardoned on their sending deputies to Philadelphia to acknowledge their fault, yet they contended themselves with loose letters by Indian traders, some of which have been delivered, and some not; but had they all been delivered, this was not a becoming manner of addressing the government, nor could they expect anything from it.

You will, therefore, speak to them by themselves, and give them such a quantity of goods, as upon their present temper, and the frankness of their submission, you shall think they deserve.

Given in council, under my hand and the lesser seal of the province, at Philadelphia, the 23d day of June, Anno Domini. 1748.\*

Anthony Palmer

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\*Prov. Rec. L. P. 329-334