

models on which the Constitution of the new United States of America was based. Apparently the league somewhat resembled the union of the 13 colonies in organization, but some contend that it could more accurately be compared to the United Nations. The league did not deal with internal problems of the member tribes, but solely with the external affairs of war and peace. The league had a constitution that was orally transmitted, but it could not levy taxes and it lacked a police force to carry out its decisions.

The hereditary leaders, the Council of Sachems, also translated as the Confederate Lords or the Confederate Council, could not interfere in the affairs of individual tribes—an arrangement similar to the limited power the first United States central government once had, under its Articles of Confederation, over the internal affairs of the 13 states. Each tribe had its own Sachems but they were also limited in other powers; they dealt with relations between clans but not with clan matters themselves. The emphasis was on equality between individual tribes.

Democratic as the Iroquois system might have appeared to early settlers, it too suffered from the shortcomings that have existed in other power structures. The 50 Sachem titles were rigidly controlled. Only males belonging to certain matrilineages within each tribe could hold the Sachem or lordship titles. When a Sachem died his successors could be selected from only the matrilineage holding that title. Furthermore, the women were the ones who did the choosing. If the Sachem selected failed to perform his duties or to respond to the wishes of the tribe, he was removed and replaced. While the women did not themselves rule, they had the sole power to appoint and to remove from office.

Now we come to the Great Laws. The Constitution of the Iroquois League is known to the Iroquois as the Great Binding Law or the Great Immutable Law. In Iroquois the term is Ne Gayanashagowa. Transmitted orally from one generation to another, its knowledge has been preserved by a collection of wampum, string bead belts. Each bead served to recall a law or regulation. Not until recently have the Iroquois attempted to put their code in written form. The version of the constitution now held authentic by the Iroquois in New York and Ontario was drafted into the English language by Arthur C. Parker, of distinguished Seneca-Iroquois ancestry. Consisting of 117 separate sections, it makes provision for the whole spectrum of inter-tribal relationship and social intercourse. The prefatory articles of the Great Immutable Law are not too dissimilar to the preambles preceding the constitutions of modern states.

The constitution allocates specific duties to each of the five member tribes. The Onondaga—the Fire Keepers who looked after the Council Fire—were charged with the responsibility of calling the Confederate Council into session after they had duly considered the necessity of bringing a matter before the Confederate Council. Under the constitution the Mohawk Lords were appointed as leaders of the Five Nations Confederacy with a deciding veto power. The Mohawk Council was divided into three sections for deliberative purposes, with the third having the responsibility of monitoring and ensuring the exactitude of the discussion.

[Hon. Mr. Williams.]

Section 5 of the constitution says in part:

The third party is to listen only to the discussion of the first and second parties and if an error is made or the proceeding is irregular they are to call attention to it, and when the case is right and properly decided by the two parties they shall confirm the decision of the two parties and refer the case to the Seneca Lords for their decision. When the Seneca Lords have decided in accordance with the Mohawk Lords, the case or question shall be referred to the Cayuga and Oneida Lords on the opposite side of the house.

Section 55 provides for dissolution as follows:

Every five years the Five Nations Confederate Lords and the people shall assemble and shall ask one another if their minds are still in the same spirit of unity for the Great Binding Law and if any of the Five Nations shall not pledge continuance and steadfastness to the pledge of unity then the Great Binding Law shall dissolve.

• (2100)

An interesting provision in Section 75 resembles that of the accepted international right of asylum:

When a member of an alien nation comes to the territory of the Five Nations and seeks refuge and permanent residence, the Lords of the Nation to which he comes shall extend hospitality and make him a member of the nation. Then shall he be accorded equal rights and privileges in all matters except as after mentioned.

Interestingly, a process of referendum for gravely important matters was also provided for by the constitution. Section 93 states:

Whenever a specially important matter or a great emergency is presented before the Confederate Council and the nature of the matter affects the entire body of Five Nations, threatening their utter ruin, then the Lords of the Confederacy must submit the matter to the decision of their people and the decision of the people shall affect the decision of the Confederate Council. This decision shall be a confirmation of the voice of the people.

Honourable senators, I have referred to only small portions of the 117 sections of the great law established by a primitive people. I ask you: Did isolation defeat the Six Nations way of life? I believe so. If there had been no discovery of this continent by the Europeans, this wonderful form of government may have extended to the entire continent just as the Inca and Aztec civilization was moving northward. Unfortunately, the Spanish conquistadors destroyed that civilization just as the newcomers divided the Six Nations, introduced firearms, and nipped that wonderful effort of a primitive people in its bud, so to speak.

This is the glorious past of the Six Nations, honourable senators. They are still living in isolation, more so than the other nationals of this great Canada. I want to see extension of this just society, this affluent society, to the Indian people. Canada is resource rich and can well afford a fixed income for the adult Indian as he has no future, jobwise or otherwise. He is isolated, and robbed of his pride, his self respect, his heritage, and his freedom to