

Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To John Sullivan, October 20, 1965

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October 20, 1965.

John A. Sullivan, Executive Secretary,
American Friends Service Committee,
814 N. E. 40th Street,
Seattle, Washington. 98105.

Dear Friend:--

Your letter of the 14th and your memorandum of the same date about the fishing rights (or wrongs) of the Indians on the Nisqually River arrived on the day I left on an absence from which I returned -- I was about to say this morning about 1:00 A.M. but it wasn't this morning, for it has ceased to be October 20 and has been October 21 for some minutes. Well, I'm calling it the 20th till I go to bed, and I'm going to do that earlier than I did 22 hours ago. I got to bed soon after 3:00 o'clock A.M. on the morning of the 20th, and it is no longer the 20th. Now don't read that first paragraph. But start with this ^{next} one.

If anybody knows what we ought to do about those Indians and their fishing rights outside of their reservation beyond what a white citizen may have, I'm certainly not the man who knows.

The United States government maintains that it has the right to do what it decides to do, in definite and positive violation of agreement, treaty or any other way in which it has pledged its faith. Our gold certificates that used to be a big part of our currency stated, "This certifies that there has been deposited in the treasury of the United States Twenty Gold Dollars, payable to the bearer on demand." The government repudiated that promise on every gold certificate. Government bonds used to be payable in Gold. The government repudiated that agreement, and "gold" bonds became payable in greenbacks that had no metal behind them.

In matters that concern the Indians, the building of the dam that flooded out the Seneca Nation is a perfect example of the attitude of the government in regard to treaties. It was admitted by congressmen, senators, the secretary of the interior, the president and everybody else in the government that the building of this dam was definitely in violation of the treaty made in good faith between the Seneca Nation and the United States government, but it was decided that it was for the best interests of the public that this dam should be built, and in the face of the protests of the Seneca Nation and of protests from people in all walks of life all over the nation they did it. They claimed that they had a right to do it; and there was no suggestion that I ever heard in all my correspondence with government leaders that they ever intended to be faithful to a treaty obligation when they decided that it was to the benefit of "the public" to violate it.

Before we take any action, it would seem to me that we should be very sure of our ground, of the treaty rights of the Indians, of the relation of the federal government and the state government ~~and the state government~~ in the case, and things of that sort, some of which might be in doubt until settled by the United

States Supreme Court -- and even that might not be a permanent settlement -- this high court has reversed itself more than once.

On any question of brutality of officers, state or national, that's everybody's business. As to the collection of evidence on that matter, somebody ought to attend to that -- really the civil officers of the state ought to attend to that with nothing more than a bit of encouragement -- they ought not to need even that.

If there was any conference of the Administrative Council I was away and did not have any hand in it.

About the Steve Cary tape, you evidently had not received my letter of the 13th in which I told you that we had got a change of date for its presentation to the college audience to the 11th of November, on the expectation that it will be sent to us immediately after its use on the 7th so that it will reach us on the 10th. If that arrangement has had to be changed, I hope we may know it at once.

I have not had a chance to see Kelsey Hinshaw about that record of my speech at Seabeck. My guess is that he has returned it before this. I hope so. I don't like to call him at 1:30 A.M., and I hope to get this letter into the mail maybe before I go to bed.

I heard Steve Cary in his speech at Lewis & Clark. It -- ah -- seems to -- ah -- me, that his speech -- ah -- would be shorter -- ah -- if he omitted -- ah -- some of his -- ah -- ahs.

I'm glad you got some enjoyment out of "Variable Winds." I'd like to find the copy I had ready for "Vagrant Breezes." I certainly hope I did not burn that stuff up with other material that has been going up in smoke. I think the best narrative poem that I have written was in that collection. I think I'll find it all when, if ever, I get to the job of straightening up that den of mine.

With best wishes all the time, I am

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.