

PENNSYLVANIA AND THE ALBANY CONGRESS, 1754

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THE Albany Congress of 1754, the most important of pre-Revolutionary intercolonial gatherings in British North America, has not been neglected by historians. Much has already been written about the Albany Congress and its accomplishments. The two main problems considered at Albany, Indian relations and defensive union, were of primary importance to the colonies and later to the independent United States. The constitution of 1787 partially embodied the federal ideas discussed at Albany; the problem of the Indians plagued the colonies and later states long after the Albany Congress had ended.

This article, covering the period from February to December, 1754, is an account of the participation of the colony of Pennsylvania in the work of the Albany Congress. Pennsylvania and its commissioners played an extremely important role at the Congress. Benjamin Franklin, the leading Pennsylvania commissioner, can be, in fact, immediately identified as one of the most influential figures at the meetings of 1754. Franklin's role at Albany contributed to his later position as perhaps the greatest colonial American.

The chain of events leading to the Albany Congress is well known. The Congress met at the very moment that England and France began their final struggle for supremacy in America. Both countries recognized the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle of 1748 as merely a lull in the long-enduring conflict, and by 1753 had initiated projects to extend control over a vast area, including the strategic "forks of the Ohio." The French undertook the building of a series of forts in the disputed territory, and the colony of Virginia, through the Ohio Company, laid plans for the settlement of the region. The tension thus built up was a prelude to the

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French and Indian War—which had its genesis in this particular area.¹

The pawns in this struggle in America were the Indians, and especially the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederation: the Oneidas, Mohawks, Onondagas, Cayugas, Senecas, and Tuscaroras. In the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, following “Queen Anne’s War,” the French had recognized a British protectorate over these tribes.² In 1753, stirred by the obvious fact that the allegiance of the Iroquois was only superficial, the British took steps to renew their friendship with the Six Nations. On September 18, 1753, the Board of Trade dispatched a series of letters concerning Indian relations. One directed Sir Danvers Osborne, newly appointed governor of New York, to convene representatives of his colony and six others for an interview with the Indians of the Six Nations. A second letter, circular in nature, sent to the governors of Virginia, Maryland, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, informed them of the proposed Indian conference and asked for their cooperation. The final communication enlightened the Earl of Holdernessee, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, concerning the Board of Trade’s plans.³ These communications set the stage for the Albany Congress of 1754.

On February 14, 1754, Governor James Hamilton of Pennsylvania officially informed the Pennsylvania Assembly of the Board of Trade’s letter on the forthcoming Indian conference. Lieutenant Governor James DeLancey of New York, Hamilton reported to the Assembly, had scheduled the meeting for mid-June at Albany.⁴ The governor proceeded to impress upon the Assembly his own conception of the importance of the meeting:

Several Letters have passed between me and the Governor of New York, Virginia, and the Massachusetts, in which

¹ See Donald H. Kent, *The French Invasion of Western Pennsylvania, 1753* (Harrisburg, 1954); Robert C. Newbold, *The Albany Congress and Plan of Union of 1754* (New York, 1955), 17-37; Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution* (New York, 1942), V, 3-112.

² Gipson, *The British Empire*, V, 65, 79.

³ *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, VI, 799-802. On August 28, 1753, Holdernessee in a circular letter to the colonial governors asked them to cooperate on matters of mutual assistance against the French. See *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8th Series, V, 3640-3641.

⁴ *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 225. DeLancey acted in place of Sir Danvers Osborne, who took his own life on October 12, 1754. See Gipson, *The British Empire*, V, 111.

they make this Province the Tender of their Assistance, express an hearty Desire of acting in Concert with Us against his Majestie's Enemies, concur in Sentiment with His Majestie's Ministers of the Necessity of a general Union of all the Provinces both in Councils and Forces; and as Experience, the best of Instructors, makes it evident beyond a Doubt that without this his Majestie's Colonies in America are in Danger of being swallowed up by an Enemy otherwise much inferior to them in Strength and Numbers, I most earnestly recommend it to you, and hope what is so well and justly said on this and other Matters by Lord Holdernesse, the Lords of Trade, and the neighboring Governors, will have their full Force and Weight with You in your Deliberations.⁵

The Assembly, responding to the Governor's message, was only lukewarm concerning the proposed meeting. This Quaker-dominated group felt it would be "inconvenient" for Pennsylvania to deal with the Indians at such a location as Albany, but, if the Governor wished, it would condescend to the appointment of commissioners. Presents for the Indians, suggested by the Board of Trade in its circular letter, would be "small," because "we have been already at so considerable an Expence in our late Treaty . . .," and also because it would not "answer any good Purpose, to make it very large at this Time."⁶ The Assembly referred to the meeting of three Pennsylvania commissioners, Richard Peters, Isaac Norris, and Benjamin Franklin, with representatives of the Indians at Carlisle in September and October, 1753. A treaty of amity had resulted from this conference. Furthermore, the commissioners, on behalf of the governor and people of Pennsylvania, had plied the Indians with expensive gifts.⁷ The Assembly actually felt that the Albany gathering was superfluous.

Still hoping for a better response from his Assembly, Governor Hamilton wrote to DeLancey of New York for further information on the meeting. When he laid DeLancey's answer before the Assembly on April 4, 1754, he asked its members to advise him so that he could instruct the Pennsylvania commissioners "as may be

⁵ *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 225-226.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 8th Series, V, 3655.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4th Series, II, 197-198; *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, V, 665-686 (report of the three Pennsylvania commissioners to Hamilton, November 1, 1753). These *Minutes* are usually referred to as *Col. Records*, and will be so cited hereafter.

suitable and adequate to the Purpose.”⁸ Hoping for a wide mandate from the Assembly, he emphasized the dangers of the French menace and pleaded for intercolonial cooperation, as he had on a previous occasion.⁹ In response, the Assembly sent two of its members, William Callender and William Parsons, to sound out the governor on his choice of commissioners to represent Pennsylvania at Albany. These messengers reported after seeing Hamilton that he preferred John Penn and Richard Peters of the Provincial Council, and Benjamin Franklin and Isaac Norris of the Assembly.¹⁰ The choice of commissioners seems diplomatic; they represented a compromise between the administration and the Assembly, and Franklin and Norris were men whose influence in the Assembly might be helpful if there were any significant results. Peters, Norris, and Franklin also had the benefit of the previous experience with the Indians at Carlisle.

On April 12, 1754, the Assembly expressed its approval of Hamilton's nominations, and appropriated five hundred English pounds as a present for the Six Nations. The lawmakers then decided to adjourn until May 13, when, as they informed the governor, they would provide for the expenses of the Albany commissioners. When Hamilton registered strenuous protests against the indifference of the Assembly, that body agreed to reconvene on May 6, one week earlier than originally planned.¹¹ The fact that the Assembly decided to adjourn at this point, against the wishes of the governor, indicated that it was not overawed either by the nature of the proposed conference or by threats from the hostile French at the borders of the colony. The passiveness of the Assembly continued after the results of the Albany Congress became known a few months later.

Governor Hamilton was much interested in the prospects for intercolonial union, and had much correspondence on the subject with officials of other colonies. Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts wrote Hamilton on March 4, 1754, that the Albany meeting would “yield the most favourable Opportunity for be-

⁸ *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 268-269.

⁹ On March 2, 1754, Hamilton sent to the assembly a letter which discussed the Indian problem and the necessity of heeding the pleas of Virginia for aid against the French. See *ibid.*, 243-250.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8th Series, V, 3690-3691.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3694-3697.

ginning such an Union." DeLancey of New York, writing on April 19, 1754, emphasized that there would never be a "more favourable opportunity to concert a scheme for this purpose than at the Albany Treaty, where I shall probably see Commissioners from most of the Governments. . . ." DeLancey further urged Hamilton to empower his commissioners to enter into some sort of intercolonial union.¹² Hamilton communicated the Shirley-DeLancey views to the Assembly on May 7, 1754, adding that the proposal for union was "so agreeable with my Sentiments that I earnestly recommend it to your Consideration, and that you will enable me to instruct the Commissioners from this Province to concur with Those from the other Colonies in case a reasonable Plan shall be offered them for that Purpose."¹³

Again the Assembly demonstrated its reluctance to cooperate fully with the governor. On May 17, 1754, it did draw an order for the five hundred pound Indian gift, and arranged for the Pennsylvania commissioners to draw the funds necessary for their trip to Albany.¹⁴ The next day, however, the Assembly informed the governor: ". . . We consider that no Propositions for an Union of the Colonies, in *Indian* Affairs, can effectually answer the good Purposes, or be binding, farther than they are confirmed by Laws, enacted under the several Government [sic] comprized in that Union. . . ." The Assembly, by announcing the need for ratification of a union by the individual colonies, made it clear that Pennsylvania's sovereignty had to be respected. This message further rebuked Hamilton by saying that the Pennsylvania commissioners should only "answer the Ends proposed in the Letter from the Lords of Trade, of the Eighteenth of *September* last. . . ."¹⁵ Consequently, the commission of the Pennsylvania delegates, signed by the governor on May 30, 1754, made no reference to intercolonial union. The document simply instructed the four gentlemen to enter into a treaty of friendship with the Iroquois and to give them the present provided by the governor and the Assembly.¹⁶

¹² *Col. Records*, VI, 19, 33.

¹³ *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 274. This union, it should be noted, was mainly to coordinate the handling of Indian affairs.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8th Series, V, 3708.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3717-3718.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4th Series, II, 282-284.

Hamilton's wishes had not prevailed, as he indicated with obvious disappointment in a letter to DeLancey on June 2, 1754:

It would have given me the greatest Satisfaction could I have sent these Gentlemen to you under Instructions agreeable to your own Plan . . . and this I have not failed frequently to represent to the leading men of our Assembly in private as well as to the whole in Publick. But from the particular Views of Some and the Ignorance and Jealousy of Others, I have not been able to obtain from them any specific Powers or Advices in relation to this Affair; and have, therefore, been obliged to content myself with giving them a general Commission to renew the Covenant Chain with the Six Nations. . . . I am in hopes, nevertheless, with you, that upon a full and free Discussion of the State of the Colonies at the Treaty, something of general Utility may be agreed upon, or that a candid Representation of our Condition may be made to his Majesty, and his Interposition implored for our Protection; since unless some proper Measures be speedily taken, I can see nothing to prevent this very fine Province, owing to the Absurdity of its Constitution and the Principles of the governing Parts of its Inhabitants, from being an easy Prey to the Attempts of the Common Enemy.¹⁷

The delegates at Albany drew up "something of general Utility" and carried out Hamilton's suggestion of a "candid Representation." The governor was clearly in line with those colonial elements which felt that energetic attempts at intercolonial cooperation were essential.¹⁸

With perhaps one exception, the backgrounds of the four Pennsylvania commissioners qualified them for their posts. The Board of Trade had asked for the selection as commissioners of "Men of Character, Ability and Integrity, and well acquainted with *Indian Affairs*."¹⁹ William Penn's grandson, John Penn, only

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁸ Lawrence Henry Gipson, in "The Drafting of the Albany Plan of Union: A Problem in Semantics," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVI (October, 1959), 298, states that Governor Shirley of Massachusetts "was the only one of the colonial governors to give active support to the idea of an American union." The evidence presented here refutes this by showing Governor Hamilton's interest in the project. In contrast to Shirley, however, Hamilton did not have the support of his Assembly.

¹⁹ *Pa. Archives*, 8th Series, V, 3641-3642.

twenty-five years old, was not as important or as well qualified as the others. After a clandestine marriage which his family disapproved, he had come to Pennsylvania from England in 1752. Because of his family connections he soon acquired a seat on the Provincial Council.²⁰ His youth, his brief residence in America, and his lack of experience in Indian relations hardly qualified him for his position. On the other hand, Richard Peters—lawyer, clergyman, land secretary, provincial secretary, and councillor—was one of Pennsylvania's leading men. As provincial secretary, he had handled Indian affairs for the colony and gained experience which made him an excellent choice for the Albany meeting.²¹ Isaac Norris, a wealthy Philadelphia merchant, had been a member of the Assembly for twenty years, serving as its Speaker after 1750. The leader of the Quaker majority in the Assembly, Norris' appointment came probably because of his influence with that group.²² Nothing needs to be said here about Benjamin Franklin. The pages which follow demonstrate that he was eminently well qualified and likewise well prepared to serve at the conference. At the request of Lieutenant Governor DeLancey of New York, a fifth Pennsylvanian attended the Albany Congress. DeLancey wished to employ Conrad Weiser, well-known Indian trader and interpreter, as official interpreter at Albany. Although Weiser declined to serve in this formal capacity on the ground that his command of the Indian language had deteriorated through disuse, he did attend unofficially and played an important role in the long deliberations with the Indians.²³

The Pennsylvania commissioners left Philadelphia on Monday, June 3, 1754, and arrived in Albany on June 17.²⁴ While in New York City en route to Albany, Franklin sent a paper entitled "Short Hints Towards a Scheme for Uniting the Northern Colo-

²⁰ *Dictionary of American Biography*, Allen Johnson, Dumas Malone, Harris E. Starr and Robert Livingston Schuyler, eds. (New York, 1929-1958), XIV, 430; Charles P. Keith, *The Provincial Councillors of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1883), 309-315.

²¹ *D.A.B.*, XIV, 508; Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, 235-241; Hubertis Cummings, *Richard Peters: Provincial Secretary and Cleric, 1704-1776* (Philadelphia, 1944), *passim*.

²² *D.A.B.*, XIII, 554-555; Keith, *Provincial Councillors*, 48-53.

²³ *Col. Records*, VI, 15. See also Paul A. W. Wallace, *Conrad Weiser* (Philadelphia, 1945), 357.

²⁴ *Pa. Archives*, 1st Series, II, 145-146. Printed here is a very sketchy diary of the journey of the Pennsylvania commissioners to Albany. See also *ibid.*, 4th Series, II, 698.

nies" to his friend James Alexander, who was a member of the Governor's Council in New York. Franklin asked him to "peruse . . . and make remarks in correcting or improving the scheme," and then to forward these remarks and the "Short Hints" to Cadwallader Colden, Surveyor General of New York and also a friend of Franklin's.²⁵ Alexander, finding the plan "extreamly well digested," sent it as directed to Colden, who in a paper called "Remarks on Short Hints towards a Scheme for Uniting the Northern Colonies" suggested a few changes.²⁶ Archibald Kennedy, another member of the New York Governor's Council, also examined the plan which Franklin had drawn up.²⁷

Actually, Franklin had not composed his Short Hints on the spur of the moment. In a letter to his partner James Parker as early as March 20, 1751, Franklin had outlined his thoughts on a plan of colonial union. This letter was Franklin's reaction to a pamphlet which Parker had sent him, entitled *The Importance of Gaining and Preserving the Friendship of the Indians to the British Interest Considered*, written by Archibald Kennedy, the New Yorker mentioned above. Advocating intercolonial union, Franklin felt that a voluntary union was preferable to one imposed by Parliament.²⁸ And on May 9, 1754, Franklin's *Pennsylvania Gazette*, probably anticipating the Albany Congress, printed a cartoon depicting a snake cut into eight segments, representing New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The print, captioned "Join or Die," appeared the same month in several other colonial newspapers.²⁹ Franklin was well prepared upon his arrival in Albany, therefore, to press for the adoption of some sort of union. Possibly Governor Hamilton took Franklin's support of union into consideration when selecting the commissioners from Pennsylvania.

The Albany Congress, originally scheduled by DeLancey for

²⁵ Jared Sparks, ed., *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (Boston, 1856), III, 27.

²⁶ Cadwallader Colden, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden* (New York, 1918-37), IV, 442, 449-451.

²⁷ John Bigelow, ed., *The Life of Benjamin Franklin Written By Himself* (Philadelphia, 1875), I, 308.

²⁸ Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1938), 214-215.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 226. See also Newbold, *The Albany Congress*, 32-33, and Frederic R. Kirkland, "An Unknown Franklin Cartoon," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXIII (January, 1949), 76.

June 14, 1754, began five days later, after a delay caused by the tardy arrival of some of the Indians. Except on Sundays, the conference met each day in morning and afternoon sessions.³⁰ Three main accomplishments resulted from the Congress: (1) a superficial renewal of friendship with the Indians; (2) a "Representation" on the state of the colonies; and (3) the Albany Plan of Union. Perhaps even more important for the proprietors of Pennsylvania was the successful negotiation of a large land purchase from the Indians while the Congress was in session.

The first business of the delegates when the Congress opened was the task of renewing friendship and alliance with the Six Nations. Pennsylvania, as one of the attendants at the conference, naturally concerned itself with this problem. On June 19, the delegates appointed a committee, including Isaac Norris of Pennsylvania, to draft a speech to the Indians.³¹ Richard Peters, another Pennsylvania delegate, was active in the debate at the opening session. According to the diary of Theodore Atkinson, a delegate from New Hampshire, Peters spoke at length describing Pennsylvania's relations with the Indians.³² By June 29, the Congress approved the draft speech to the Indians, and Richard Peters, along with Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts, presented it to DeLancey. He, as presiding officer at the Congress, made additions and delivered the revised version at a mass meeting of the Indians on the same day, in the presence of all the Albany commissioners.³³ In the course of their reply to DeLancey's speech on July 2, the Indians grumbled, among other things, about violations of their tribal lands by Virginia, Pennsylvania, and even the French. Specifically, the Indians complained that Pennsylvania had made paths through Indian lands and built houses without the permission of the tribes. Conrad Weiser defended Pennsylvania the next day, when the Congress answered the various Indian complaints. Weiser maintained that the "Road to Ohio is no new Road." The Indians soon admitted this fact and dropped the

³⁰ *Docs. Rel. to Col. Hist. of the State of New-York*, VI, 853-892. The text of the Albany minutes is found here. They may also be found in *Col. Records*, VI, 57-110. Virginia and New Jersey sent no delegates, while Connecticut and Rhode Island, not officially invited, did attend.

³¹ *Col. Records*, VI, 58, 64.

³² Beverly McAnear, ed., "Personal Accounts of the Albany Congress of 1754," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXIX (March, 1953), 732.

³³ *Col. Records*, VI, 65, 72.

complaint against Pennsylvania.³⁴ By July 9, the Indians had reaffirmed their friendship for the English, received their many gifts, including that from Pennsylvania, and departed from Albany. Thus, on the surface at least, one of the major goals of the Board of Trade in calling the conference had been attained.³⁵

While the Indians were still at Albany, they agreed to two land sales, one to the proprietors of Pennsylvania—the other to Connecticut. The Pennsylvania commissioners, especially Peters and Penn, had come to Albany specifically hoping to expand Pennsylvania's landholdings.³⁶ As a matter of fact, the Pennsylvania governor informed his Council after the Albany Congress that Peters and Penn had been instructed "to try, by all the means in their power to make a Purchase, and the Larger the better. . . ."³⁷ At the morning meeting of the conference of July 3, the Pennsylvania commissioners outlined the progress of their land dealings with the Indians. They suggested that the topic be considered in the reply to the Indians, which as already noted occurred later this same day. Also on July 3, Hendrick, a Mohawk and the Indian spokesman, mentioned the projected land sale to the assembled commissioners. Holding up the symbolic "Two Belts," he told the Congress that the Pennsylvania proprietors desired to purchase Indian lands, and wanted to know if it should be discussed in the "publick Congress."³⁸ DeLancey and the Congress, deciding that this was a private matter, told the Pennsylvanians to carry on their land business privately, to the "great Surprise" of these gentlemen.³⁹ They assumed that the negotiations should be public, an attitude which testifies to their good faith in the matter.

With this mandate for the purchase from the Congress, the Pennsylvania commissioners held a series of private meetings with

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 78-82, 84-85, 89.

³⁵ During the French and Indian War the Iroquois Confederation remained officially neutral, although the individual tribes fluctuated in their policies. The Albany agreement with the Indians, therefore, did not achieve its desired end, the close cooperation of the Iroquois tribes with the English. See Herbert L. Osgood, *The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1924), IV, 422.

³⁶ *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 696-724. This is the Penn-Peters report to Hamilton, August 5, 1754, on their dealings with the Indians. See also Newbold, *The Albany Congress*, 60.

³⁷ *Pa. Archives*, 1st Series, II, 167.

³⁸ *Docs. Rel. to Col. Hist. of the State of New-York*, VI, 871; *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 700.

³⁹ *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 700-702.

the Indians at the home of James Stevenson, where they were lodged in Albany. At a meeting of July 5 between the Pennsylvania commissioners and seventy representatives from the Six Nations led by Hendrick, with Conrad Weiser as interpreter, the Indians agreed to sell land. They would reserve, they insisted, "the land at Shamokin and Wyomink; our Bones are scattered there, and on this Land there has always been a great Council Fire." They promised, furthermore, that they would not sell the area to any other buyer, as they wanted it as a reserve "to settle such of our Nations upon as shall come to us from the Ohio, or any others who shall deserve to be in our Alliance."⁴⁰ Finally on July 6, the four Pennsylvanians signed the deed for the lands which the Indians had decided to sell. For a consideration of four hundred New York pounds, the Pennsylvania proprietors added a vast area to their landholdings. The purchase extended northwest by west from the Kittatinny Hills on the west branch of the Susquehanna River to the established limits of the province on the west, and then south to the southern boundary. The line continued along the southern boundary of Pennsylvania to the south portion of the hills, and then back to the starting point. The deed also provided for additional compensation for the Indians when the region north and west of the Allegheny Mountains was settled.⁴¹

Even though the Indians had refused to sell the Wyoming lands to Pennsylvania, in fact had promised to keep them perpetually, they deeded the area to Connecticut in an agreement reached on July 11, 1754. Notwithstanding protests from the Pennsylvania commissioners, the Reverend Timothy Woodbridge, agent of a group in Connecticut called the "Susquehannah Company," and John Henry Lydius, an Indian trader of questionable character living at Albany, engineered this deal. Lydius, after plying the sachems with liquor, persuaded them to sign a deed granting to the Susquehannah Company a large tract of land in what is now central Pennsylvania. For this area of about five million acres

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 702-708.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 708-709. The text of the deed is in *ibid.*, 710-716. See also Gipson, *The British Empire*, V, 122; William Robert Shepherd, *History of Proprietary Government in Pennsylvania*, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, Columbia University, VI, No. 16 (New York, 1896), 103; and Solon J. and Elizabeth H. Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, 1939), 78, 558-559. According to the Penn-Peters report to Governor Hamilton, none of the land purchased extended farther north than latitude 41° 30'. See *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 700.

between the forty-first and the forty-third degrees north latitude, the Connecticut company agreed to pay two thousand New York pounds.⁴² This purchase was significant, not only because the buyers arranged it by questionable means, but also because it precipitated a long controversy between Pennsylvania and Connecticut.⁴³

"The Representation of the present state of the Colonies," a twelve-point document drawn up at the Albany Congress, requires little attention here, except as it concerned the Pennsylvania delegates. Suggested at a session on July 1, the Congress received the statement in draft on July 6, and after some debate adopted it on July 9. The committee which devised the Representation included Benjamin Franklin from Pennsylvania, although Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts did most of the actual drafting. Intended for submission to the British government and addressed to the King, the Representation outlined the threat facing the colonies, and suggested among other things that the colonies be unified in some fashion. In a sense, it was a justification of the plan of union drawn up by the Congress.⁴⁴ Writing later, Thomas Hutchinson assessed its importance: "The representation of the imminent danger to the colonies from the French encroachments, probably accelerated those measures in England which brought on the war with France."⁴⁵

The most important (though unauthorized) work of the Albany Congress involved the formation of the "Albany Plan of Union," which appears to be basically the result of ideas presented by the Pennsylvania delegate, Benjamin Franklin. As indicated above, Franklin had early formulated his ideas on union, had set them down on paper, and had even discussed them with several persons on the way to Albany. He hoped that the Albany meeting would adopt such a union, and came to the Congress with a thorough

⁴² Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Susquehanna Company Papers* (Wilkes-Barre, 1930-33), I, lxiv-lxxxiv, gives an excellent account of this affair; *Pa. Archives*, 1st Series, II, 147-158 contains a copy of the Susquehanna Deed. See also Gipson, *The British Empire*, V, 122 and *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 697-698.

⁴³ *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 696-702, and *ibid.*, 1st Series, II, 170-171.

⁴⁴ *Col. Records*, VI, 78, 90, 93, 100-105. See also Newbold, *The Albany Congress*, 72-86 and Gipson, *The British Empire*, V, 132-133.

⁴⁵ Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay*, Lawrence Shaw Mayo, ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), III, 18.

background and specific suggestions as to how the union should be set up.⁴⁶ The Union Committee of the Congress considered other plans of union, including one by another Pennsylvania delegate, Richard Peters. Peters' suggestion, entitled "A Plan for a General Union of the British Colonies of North America," would have divided the colonies into four regions for defensive purposes, and provided a "Union Fund," "Union Regiment," and "Fort Fund." Although it had no visible effect on the final Albany Plan, it indicated that Peters, like his colleague Franklin, was a firm supporter of intercolonial union.⁴⁷ As to other schemes, Franklin himself wrote "that several of the commissioners had form'd plans . . ." and that "tho' I projected the Plan and drew it, I was oblig'd to alter some Things contrary to my Judgment. . . ."⁴⁸

An interesting historical argument exists as to the identity of the primary architect of the plan. Lawrence Henry Gipson, an outstanding authority on the British Empire in America, maintains that Thomas Hutchinson and Benjamin Franklin deserve equal credit for their contributions to the Albany Plan of Union. Gipson bases his argument on the existence of copies of a "New England Plan" of union, supposedly the work of Hutchinson, and also a statement Hutchinson made in a letter to Governor Francis Bernard of Massachusetts in 1769: "At the congress at Albany in 1754 I was in favo of an Union of the govts for certain Purposes & I drew the Plan which was then accepted. . . ."⁴⁹ In contrast is another Hutchinson statement: "The plan for a general union was projected by Benjamin Franklin, Esq., one of the commissioners from the province of Pensilvania, the heads whereof he brought with him."⁵⁰ Verner W. Crane has used this evidence as well as basic criticism of Gipson's many assumptions to dispute

⁴⁶ Herman V. Ames, "The Public Career of Benjamin Franklin: A Life of Service," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LV (July, 1931), 197-198. Ames says that Franklin specifically had studied the constitution of the old New England Confederation formed in 1643.

⁴⁷ *Pa. Archives*, 1st Series, II, 197-199; Newbold, *The Albany Congress*, 88-90; Gipson, *The British Empire*, V, 127-128.

⁴⁸ Bigelow, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, I, 308, and Albert Henry Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1907), III, 243.

⁴⁹ See Lawrence Henry Gipson, "Thomas Hutchinson and the Framing of the Albany Plan of Union, 1754," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXIV (January, 1950), 5-35, and "The Drafting of the Albany Plan of Union: A Problem in Semantics," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVI (October, 1959), 291-316.

⁵⁰ *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay*, III, 16.

Hutchinson's importance and to maintain that Franklin deserves most of the credit for the Albany Plan.⁵¹ Conclusion of this argument awaits the dubious possibility of the discovery of more historical evidence on the drafting of the various plans considered at the Congress. Professor Gipson has not yet proved his case beyond a doubt, and Franklin must still receive credit as the principal author of the Albany Plan, although certainly he used the ideas of others to some extent.

On June 24, 1754, the Congress selected a "Union Committee," including Thomas Hutchinson, Benjamin Franklin, Theodore Atkinson of New Hampshire, Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, William Pitkin of Connecticut, Benjamin Tasker of Maryland, and William Smith of New York to "prepare and receive Plans and Schemes for the Union of the Colonies and to digest them into one general Plan. . . ."⁵² On June 28, after this group submitted its first report to the Congress, the committee handed each commissioner a copy of "Short Hints of a Scheme" for a plan of union, to be personally examined.⁵³ Before any plan could be accepted, the delegates had to solve a rather perplexing question: could the colonies effect union solely on their own authority, or must it be with the approval of Parliament? After lengthy debates, the delegates voted on July 2 that union of the colonies must be approved by an act of Parliament, thus officially recognizing Parliamentary authority over the colonies. The Albany minutes state only that this question "passed in the Affirmative," while delegate Atkinson of New Hampshire noted in his diary that "3 from Connecticut & 2 from Pensilvania did not Vote for it."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Verner W. Crane and Lawrence Henry Gipson, "Letters to the Editor on the Albany Congress Plan of Union," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXV (July, 1951), 350-362; and "Letters to the Editor on the Drafting of the Albany Plan of Union," *Pennsylvania History*, XXVII (January, 1960), 126-136. Gipson maintains that Hutchinson's "New England Plan" was amended at an informal meeting of some of the Albany commissioners on June 14, 1754, five days before formal sessions commenced. He infers that Franklin was present at this informal meeting with his own plan. The Penn-Peters report to Governor Hamilton states that the Pennsylvania commissioners did not reach Albany until June 17, 1754. If this report is accurate, and there is no reason to doubt it, Gipson's inference is questionable. See *ibid.*, 135, and *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 698 (Penn-Peters report).

⁵² *Col. Records*, VI, 66-67.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 71. See also McAnear, ed., "Personal Accounts of the Albany Congress," 735 (Atkinson's diary).

⁵⁴ *Col. Records*, VI, 78, and McAnear, ed., "Personal Accounts of the Albany Congress," 737.

Unfortunately Atkinson did not indicate who these gentlemen were, but it is interesting that the Pennsylvania delegation was split in half on this important question.

On July 9, after several days of debate, the Congress accepted the proposed plan of union, and selected Benjamin Franklin, leading exponent of intercolonial union, to make a complete draft of the plan as it then stood. The next day Franklin brought in his draft, which was further debated and then adopted.⁵⁵ Franklin's selection to put the plan into final form testifies to his leadership on the subject at the Congress. The delegates ended their formal sessions shortly after accepting the so-called Albany plan. After hearing the report of Richard Peters of Pennsylvania and John Chambers of New York on the accuracy of the minutes, the Albany Congress ceased its deliberations on July 11, 1754.⁵⁶

If one attempts to rank in order of importance the Pennsylvania commissioners at Albany, one must conclude on the basis of the Albany minutes and other evidence already presented that of the four Franklin played the dominant role. Next to him in importance stood Richard Peters, who served on several committees, presented his own plan of union, and incidentally preached three sermons to the delegates assembled at Albany.⁵⁷ Isaac Norris served on a number of committees, while John Penn, hardly mentioned in the Albany minutes, was apparently of little utility at the Congress, except for his role in the Pennsylvania land purchase. A close examination of the minutes reveals the interesting fact, however, that Penn had the best record of the four for attendance at the various sessions.⁵⁸ All of the Pennsylvania commissioners, of course, participated directly in the land purchase. Proprietor Thomas Penn, writing to Peters on June 10, 1754, had given his own estimate of the delegates even before the Congress convened. His nephew John was too inexperienced to be of much help; Franklin was a "good colleague"; Norris' "presence . . . was necessary"; as for Peters, "on your experience and management we must rely."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Col. Records*, VI, 100, 105-109.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 109-110; Newbold, *The Albany Congress*, 117.

⁵⁷ McAnear, ed., "Personal Accounts of the Albany Congress," 733, 736, 739. The Congress expressed its thanks to Peters for his sermon on June 23, 1754, and voted to have it printed.

⁵⁸ *Docs. Rel. to Col. Hist. of the State of New-York*, VI, 853-892.

⁵⁹ *The Susquehannah Company Papers*, I, 78, n. 3. Quoted from Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Penn Letter Book, III, 337-338, 342.

The day before its adjournment, the Albany Congress resolved that each colony's commissioners should submit the Plan of Union to their own legislatures for consideration.⁶⁰ On August 6, 1754, less than a month after the Congress ended, Governor James Hamilton of Pennsylvania presented the proceedings of the Albany Congress to the Provincial Council.⁶¹ The next day he sent the same information to the Assembly, and in a speech mentioned the Representation and the Plan of Union: "And as both of those Papers appear to me to contain Matters of the utmost Consequence to the Welfare of the Colonies in general, and to have been digested and drawn up with great Clearness and Strength of Judgment, I cannot but express my Approbation of them, and do, therefore, recommend them to you as well worthy of your closest and most serious Attention."⁶² As before the Congress met, the Pennsylvania Assembly unceremoniously refused to cooperate with the Governor. Later in August the group in effect rejected the Plan of Union, when it voted against referring it to the next session of the Assembly for consideration.⁶³ Franklin himself later wrote: "The House . . . by the management of a certain member, took it up when I happen'd to be absent, which I thought not very fair, and reprobated it without paying any attention to it at all, to my no small mortification."⁶⁴ It appears that the "certain member" was none other than Albany Commissioner Isaac Norris, who no doubt let his pacifist Quaker sentiments govern his actions. His role as Speaker of the Assembly provided him an ideal position for effective action against the Plan of Union.⁶⁵

The action of the Assembly represented a further rebuff to Governor Hamilton, and also to Pennsylvania's adopted son and foremost citizen, Benjamin Franklin. Indeed, Franklin was quite disgusted that none of the colonies supported the attempt at union at this time. As he wrote in December, 1754, "Every Body cries,

⁶⁰ *Col. Records*, VI, 109.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁶² *Pa. Archives*, 4th Series, II, 291.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 8th Series, V, 3733.

⁶⁴ Bigelow, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, I, 311.

⁶⁵ Newbold, *The Albany Congress*, 136. Norris was not fully cooperative even at Albany. Thomas Pownall wrote after the Congress: "What appears in the Minutes was the Unanimous Opinion of all mett except N York & in some points Mr. Norris of Philadelphia & he only so far differr'd as ye Principles of ye Party he is at ye head of lead him to appear." See McAnear, ed., "Personal Accounts of the Albany Congress," 744.

a Union is absolutely necessary; but when they come to the Manner and Form of the Union, their weak Noddles are perfectly distracted. So if ever there be an Union, it must be form'd at home by the Ministry and Parliament."⁶⁶ Hamilton's successor as Governor of Pennsylvania in the fall of 1754, Robert Hunter Morris, although urged particularly by Governor Shirley of Massachusetts to support colonial union ("It would ease you of a great part of the burthen, your Governmt may probably bring upon you otherwise, in the managemt of Military and Indian Affairs"), let the issue lie dormant, and the Pennsylvania Assembly took no further notice of it.⁶⁷

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that the colony of Pennsylvania played an extremely important part in the proceedings of the Albany Congress. Its commissioners served in many capacities, from preacher to grammarian. One of the colony's delegates, Benjamin Franklin, played a commanding role in the formulation and adoption of the most significant result of the conference, the Albany Plan of Union. As one writer has pointed out, "Franklin made rich contributions to the theory and practice of American federalism. Almost alone among Americans of the mid-eighteenth century he saw . . . the solid advantages that each colony would derive from a solemn union for certain well-defined purposes. He was far ahead of the men about him in abandoning provincialism for an intercolonial attitude. . . ."⁶⁸ These words testify well to the lasting value of Franklin's work at Albany.

Pennsylvania's commissioners closely involved themselves at Albany with Indian affairs, originally meant to be the main concern of the meetings. They cooperated with the rest of the colonies in renewing ties with the Six Nations. An active sideline was the negotiation of a large proprietary land purchase from the Indians.

The Assembly was not interested in intercolonial union, though the administration was active in that cause before, during, and after the Congress. Throughout most of 1754 the legislators pursued a policy of non-cooperation with Governor Hamilton, who

⁶⁶ Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, III, 242. Contained in a letter of December 29, 1754, to his English friend Peter Collinson.

⁶⁷ Charles Henry Lincoln, ed., *Correspondence of William Shirley* (New York, 1912), II, 96; Gipson, *The British Empire*, V, 144-145.

⁶⁸ Clinton Rossiter, "The Political Theory of Benjamin Franklin," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVI (July, 1952), 285.

nonetheless remained a persistent advocate of union. The Assembly refused to allow the commissioners the power to agree to union, and brushed off without consideration the Plan of Union which ultimately issued from the Congress. In so doing the Assembly rebuked not only the Governor, but also Benjamin Franklin. Long years later Franklin still regretted that the Albany Plan had not been accepted by the colonies and Great Britain. In February, 1789, he wrote: "On Reflection it now seems probable, that if the . . . Plan or something like it had been adopted and carried into Execution, the subsequent Separation [*sic*] of the Colonies from the Mother Country might not so soon have happened, nor the Mischiefs suffered on both sides have occurred perhaps during another Century."⁶⁹

Franklin's 1754 plan of union undoubtedly would have resulted in the extension of imperial authority over the colonies while at the same time erecting a defense against the French. Apparently Pennsylvania, like most of the other colonies, was not interested in either defense or a unified system of colonial government—though foreign enemies threatened the province. The Assembly thus perpetrated the system of weak British control over the province, and this policy had consequences which were not then clearly foreseen.

⁶⁹ "Notes and Queries," *ibid.*, XXIII (1899), 269.