

Example of le borgne, a crow chief, talks about white traders report

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History

In his statement to his tribe, Chief Le Borgne displays an intricate understanding of diplomacy. He praises white men and the goods they contribute to his people and implores on his people the importance of good relations with them. The importance of good relations with these traders is evidenced when he says “ We live better than our Fathers lived,” and furthermore when he states “ if the white men could furnish the Serpents as they furnish us with arms, we should not carry so many of the Serpents’ Scalps.” Material blessings and militaristic ambitions would be spoiled were his people to somehow molest and abuse these white visitors.

While a master of diplomacy, Le Borgne clearly has a poor understanding of the white mens customs or their sciences. He does not understand their utilization of beaver skins and thinks of them as very powerful and that “ they are like magic.”

Chief Le Borgne also instructs his son to take good care of his guests, lest some ill happen to them and then his people would fall to disrepute. He instructs his son that should the traders be safe then the “ Great Chief of the white people will be kind to you.”

It is the message of power and trade that is entreated on his people and evidently his people understand the importance of maintaining the good relations. While initially, the people were “ afraid they might throw evil medicines among us and soil our lands,” at the end an elder promises Le Borgne that he can “ depend on our goodness,” and justifies his prior suspicion by blaming that suspicion on a chief of the Corbeaux who was

angry for not receiving goods from the white men.

Thomas Jefferson's letter to congress regarding relations with the Indians is similar in its understanding of diplomacy while at the same time different in several respects. The similarities exist insofar as both letters are encouragements to trade and both are seeking to protect the interests of their nations. The differences exist in Jefferson's desire to convert the Indians from their traditional ways of living and Jefferson is less preoccupied with prosecuting war and is more interested in making money.

Trade is clearly in the interests of both leaders and both encourage diplomacy to achieve advantage. Le Borgne talks about treating his visitors well, giving them plenty to eat, and so on. Jefferson, in much the same vein warns against making tribes jealous and angry with regards to land sales. Both men are conscious that how the other side perceives them will have a great impact on the trading relations that they'll be able to carry out.

Similarly, both men are concerned with competition. Le Borgne, when he says ". we should not carry so many of the Serpents' Scalps," and Jefferson when he comments on " other civilized nations have encountered great expense our nation seems to owe to its own interest, to explore this."

However, the two men differ in their style of diplomacy. The Chief views the white men as " powerful" and like " magic." Jefferson on the other hand has a patronizing element in his letter: he seeks to wean the Indians from the forests and traditional ways of living towards agriculture and manufacturing. Finally, Le Borgne views the other Indians with a certain contempt and seems happy to have their scalps. Jefferson, on the other hand, perhaps understanding that his nation is not as powerful as the other " white men" of

the time understands the competition purely in economic terms and never mentions militaristic means, save for the guns and ammunition he will use to bribe the Indians.