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INDIAN PRESENTS: TO GIVE OR NOT TO GIVE. GOVERNOR WHITE'S QUANDARY

by RICHARD K. MURDOCH

AT THE CLOSE of the Eighteenth Century the use of presents to obtain loyalty, friendship, neutrality or allegiance was an old story to the nations of Western Europe, dating back to the days of the Greeks and Romans. Later presents were employed for the same purpose in the feudal period and in the campaigns of the Crusaders in the Holy Land. In the early years of the modern era the Portugese used presents to obtain peaceful entry into African ports as prelude to the slave trade. And finally presents were employed in the Americas by all the colonizing powers as a method of obtaining Indian support far less expensive than full scale warfare. In the long run, results were more permanent and far more fruitful.

The American Indians living under conditions quite different from Europeans, often set absurdly high value on items that were cheap in price, low in quality and numerous in quantity. Basically this made the giving of presents a cheap means of obtaining loyalty. As the claims to territories were extended, often overlapping, rivalry for loyalty of the Indians resulted in more and more present giving until by the French and Indian War in 1754 it was recognized as a part of the foreign policy of England, France and Spain, and accounted for a sizeable sum of money annually. At times the giving of presents was merely to neutralize a tribe of Indians rather than to gain active assistance.

When presents were first offered in America in the middle of the seventeenth century, this was done on a sporadic basis, usually just prior to negotiations to obtain a concession from the Indians. Later the giving of presents became an annual grant that the Indians learned to expect at stated periods and in established locations regardless of the conditions of the times.¹ By the time of the Seven Years War (French and Indian War), not to

1. The Spanish officials adopted the terms "regalos ordinarios" and "regalo anual" in referring to those presents given regularly each year. In this paper these terms will be translated as "the annual present."

give the "annual present" was a threat to the peace and stability of a region. Thus the Indians really held the upper hand and could threaten hostile action if the present was not immediately forthcoming. Demands for more numerous, more expensive and better quality goods became frequent. As an example of this, early in 1797, a federal agent in South Georgia complained, "We have a number of Indians here continually importunning us for provisions and presents, the first I have been obliged to supply them with in moderate quantity; presents I cannot think myself justifiable in giving them, atho' considerable have been made up for them before my arrival, composed of factory and public goods. . . ." ²

The use of presents was an important factor in Anglo-French Indian rivalry from 1713 to 1763 all along the Ohio River and in the relations of England, and to a lesser degree France, and Spain in the southeastern part of what is now the United States. ³ Rival Indian trading posts or factories appeared where agents attempted to lure chieftains away from old alliances with the enemy with more and more attractive offers. After the French were driven from the continent in 1763, the two remaining powers continued the active struggle for control over the loyalties of the southeastern tribes. True, the English expended less energy and money than previously for it had been the French in Canada and the Northwest who had posed the greatest threat. Less anxiety was felt for the Spanish as the two Floridas had just passed to England and the activities of the Spanish governor in New Orleans, far removed from the Atlantic coast colonies, appeared futile. Once the American colonies revolted, however, the English now in possession of the Floridas found it expedient to increase present giving to secure the loyalty of the Cherokees, Choctaws and Creeks. After the new republic appeared officially, it tried to carry on the same tradition of competing with the Spanish for the loyalty of the Indians along the southeastern

2. Diary of Benjamin Hawkins in *Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1806, Collections of the Georgia Historical Society* (Savannah, 1916), IX, pp. 66-67.
3. A detailed account of Indian presents in the period of the final Anglo-French struggle for North America can be found in Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Diplomacy and Indian Gifts: Anglo-French Rivalry along the Ohio and Northwest Frontier, 1748-1763* (Stanford University Press, 1950).

frontier.⁴ The settlers along the borders of the new nation were less willing to dicker with the Indians because of an ingrained attitude toward the redmen which echoed the statement sometimes attributed to Miles Standish that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian." This view was held by most state officers in opposition to the new federal policy which presupposed the recognition of each major Indian tribe as a national entity capable of signing treaties of amity, peace and alliance and of ceding land, to say nothing of having recognized geographic boundaries. State governments generally refused to recognize an Indian tribe as a state sovereign in the international sense and thus flung defiance in the teeth of the federal government.

The Spanish accepted this view of Indian sovereignty in principle although often privately referring to the Indians as savages, barbarians and heathens while publicly addressing the chieftains as brothers, friends, children and sons. As for the giving of presents, the Spanish were merely continuing a policy developed in the century prior to the American Revolution. The tribes offering the Spanish the greatest trouble were those living east of the Mississippi and south of the Ohio. These had learned much earlier their value in the rivalry of England, France and Spain. It continued to be the cornerstone of Spanish Indian policy to hold these tribes loyal even after 1783 for they could easily be employed to prevent a westward surge of the new republic that might endanger Spain's position at the mouth of the Mississippi and along the northeastern shore of the Gulf of Mexico. It took little argument to convince these Indians of the danger the growing frontier settlements offered them. The settlers were willing to kill off or drive away all the Indians to gain new lands. Here was the heart of the trouble between state governments, encouraging the westward expansion of their population and territory, and the federal government attempting to maintain the *status quo* as guaranteed in treaties with the Indians. This disagreement reduced the so-called "American frontier policy" to a mere figment for while the federal government took the management of Indian affairs upon itself as a constitutional obli-

4. A general account of the Indian present policy of the federal government in the early years can be found in Ora Brooks Peake, *A History of the United States Indian Factory System 1795-1822* (Denver, 1954).

gation, the shortage of federal agents in the field made it impossible to implement this policy successfully. When the federal policy was laid down, the states more often than not failed to recognize the validity of agreements with the Indians such as the Treaty of New York of 1790 and other treaties between the Philadelphia government and the Creeks.

The Spanish had long followed the policy of an annual present to each tribe, usually presented to individual chieftains. The goods were purchased from private sources and paid for with drafts on the Royal Treasury. Trade goods demanded by the Indians usually constituted these presents and delivery was made at specified places to the leading chieftains or their designated emissaries. In the two Floridas presents were handed over in Apalache and Pensacola in West Florida, and in St. Augustine in East Florida. When Spanish control was re-established after the retrocession in 1783, this policy was renewed on the old terms.

Shortly after arriving in St. Augustine in 1784, Manuel de Zepedes, the new governor of East Florida was permitted to spend approximately 10,000 pesos annually on the giving of presents to the local Indians, and for the next decade the annual expenditures for this purpose were in the neighborhood of the sum authorized. Immediately after taking office in July, 1796, Governor Enrique White ordered the required complete financial accounting of the affairs of the Royal Treasury. A quick survey of the subsequent report indicated that the records were in very bad order, especially those concerning expenses for the annual present. White reported to his immediate superior, the Governor General of Cuba, that the cost of Indian presents from July 12, 1784, through December 31, 1789, had amounted to 72,974 pesos or an average of 13,272 pesos annually. These figures did not include the salary of two interpreters at 520 pesos each annually and their daily living ration, the salaries of two agents who shipped the goods at 544 and 520 pesos annually and their daily living ration, double for one of them, and the cost to the government for arming, maintaining and supplying the vessels that delivered the goods. The governor further estimated the cost of Indian presents from January 1, 1790, through December 31, 1795, to amount to 58,579 pesos or an annual average of 9,763 pesos, a decided reduction from the previous few years.

However in the last two years, 1794 and 1795, there had been a significant increase to 11,428 and 14,258 pesos due in part to the unrest among the Indians along the frontier as a result of the Elijah Clarke invasion of the Indian Lands and the so-called Revolt of 1795. Averaged out over the eleven and one-half years, Indian presents had cost the government 11,450 pesos annually, not including "marginal" expenses.⁵

By the standards of that day these figures were large, and represented a considerable portion of the annual deficit of East Florida that had to be met by a *situado* from Mexico. White's predecessor, Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada, fearful of a combined Franco-American attack on his province from Georgia, had argued not only for the continuation of presents to the Indians, but also for a sizeable increase in the amount. The figures seem to indicate that he was permitted to make a slight increase during the last two years of his administration. When he left the province in March, 1796, turning his duties over to an interim governor until White could arrive from Pensacola, Quesada left the Royal Treasury in desperate condition with insufficient funds to pay current expenses. Thus the new governor realized that stringent economy was necessary to rehabilitate the financial position of the province.

White had been governor of West Florida for several years prior to his transfer to East Florida and had personally overseen the dispensing of presents at Pensacola and Apalache to the southern Indian tribes theoretically "attached" to his administration. He had become intimate with a number of the chieftains and head warriors who appeared before him regularly. Reaching his new post in St. Augustine, he realized almost at once that some of the more prominent chieftains on the list of those obtaining presents in East Florida had also appeared on the lists in Pensacola or Apalache. Governor Quesada, his predecessor, not acquainted with affairs in West Florida, had not realized that some of the Indians were getting "a second helping" at St. Augustine, although as White pointed out later, Quesada should have realized that the Upper and Lower Creek chieftains were

5. Enrique White to Luis de Las Casas, St. Augustine, August 24, 1796, Archivo General de Indias: Papeles de Cuba, *legajo* 1439. (Further reference to this source will be abbreviated as AGI:PC and then the *legajo* number.)

theoretically supposed to be dealing with the authorities in West Florida, while only the "plains" Indians living in the northwestern part of East Florida and the Seminoles were supposed to be coming to St. Augustine. No official designation, however, had ever been made as to which tribes were supposed to deal with the authorities in which province.

As soon as White realized what had been going on, he requested one of his assistants to prepare a report on Indian presents to include the financial accounting already mentioned.⁶ It quickly became clear that as the earlier records contained relatively few entries by the name of the recipient, it was impossible to do much cross-checking. After perusing the copious report, White prepared a dispatch for the Governor General of Cuba, in which he made several penetrating observations on the whole problem of distributing presents, stressing the great financial cost of this method of retaining Indian loyalty, especially with the condition of the Royal Treasury so critical. (A portion of this letter is included as Document A.) He then drew up a short description of the "rule of thumb" by which the giving of presents had been regulated in East Florida since 1784. (The entire enclosure is included as Document B.) White closed his letter to Cuba with the request that he be empowered to institute certain changes in the method of giving presents so that he might begin a policy of "slowing down, more care and more moderation."

The governor's request for additional powers was a direct reference to a series of Royal Orders in the previous decade establishing the specific method by which presents were to be dispensed. Much of this policy was based on suggestions made to the Crown by the Baron de Carondelet who as governor of Louisiana was responsible for maintaining peaceful relations with the Indians over much of the Mississippi Valley area. To request permission to act was not unusual for to act without such permission from the next superior official was almost unknown in the Spanish colonial system. White's report was received favorably by Las Casas who wrote in reply, "I agree with what you propose as far as the Royal Disposition is concerned, - but in this case I must consult with His Majesty about the slowing down, care and moderation you speak of because we do not want the Indians

6. White to Las Casas, St. Augustine, August 24, 1796, *op. cit.*

upset while the boundary line is being run." ⁷ He then forwarded a copy of the governor's letter to Spain with modifications and suggestions of his own.

White was not satisfied with the guarded approval expressed in Las Casas' reply as he wanted to take immediate action. Therefore he prepared a second report on the same subject of Indian presents, this time sent directly to Spain, addressed to Diego de Gardoqui, the former minister to the United States, and later the Secretary of Dispatch of the Royal Treasury, and thus a member of the Council of State. (The entire letter is included as Document C.) What White did not know at the time of writing was that Gardoqui had been relieved of this post on May 27, 1796, and had been appointed ambassador to the court of Sardinia on October 21. First the governor repeated the gist of what he had written to Las Casas on August 24, and then he went on to stress the financial savings that he could make for the Royal Treasury if permitted to put the giving of presents to the Indians on a restricted basis and to continue all Indian relations in a more businesslike manner. He requested clarification as to whether or not the fifth article of the new treaty with the United States had any bearing on the policy of giving presents along the southeastern boundary line. ⁸

White's letter was received in Spain on June 14, and was passed around the Secretariat of the Royal Treasury for perusal and comments before presenting the contents to the King and the

7. Las Casas to White, Havana, October 25, 1796, AGI:PC, *legajo* 1439. The running of the boundary line referred to the southeastern boundary of the United States to be established in accordance to the terms of the Pinckney Treaty signed a year earlier.

8. White to Diego de Gardoqui, St. Augustine, January 20, 1797, Archivo General de Indias: Santo Domingo, *legajo* 2644. (Further reference to this source will be abbreviated as AGI:SD and then the *legajo* number.) The fifth article of the Pinckney Treaty reads in part: "The two high contracting parties shall . . . maintain peace and harmony among the several Indian nations who inhabit the country adjacent to the lines and rivers, which by the preceding articles, form the boundaries of the two Floridas And whereas several treaties of friendship exist between the two contracting parties and the said nations of Indians, it is hereby agreed that in future no treaty of alliance, or other whatever (except treaties of peace,) shall be made by either party with the Indians living within the boundary of the other, but both parties will endeavor to make the advantage of the Indian trade common and mutually beneficial to their respective subject citizens, observing in all things the most complete reciprocity" *Documents of American History* (Henry Steele Commager, ed.) 4th edition (New York, 1948), pp. 168-169.

Council of State. Two briefs were prepared as it was the custom to save as much of the Council's time as possible, one very short merely outlining White's letter in the barest of terms ignoring the entire question he raised about the new treaty with the United States.⁹ (The brief is included as Document D.) The other brief was as long as the letter itself because a "note" was attached to it that attempted to offer an explanation as to why the same Indians appeared at various Spanish posts requesting presents. (The brief is included as Document E.) The author of the "note" was generally accurate in explaining that this was the result of "the Indians not having regularly a fixed residence as they move about according as it seems to please them. . . ." ¹⁰ The original letter from St. Augustine and the two briefs were presented to the King and the Council of State on June 16, 1797. A good deal of the letter was ignored as only two points seemed to interest the ministers: the governor's reference to Article 5 of the new treaty, and the possibility of added expenses to the Royal Treasury if duplicate present giving was allowed to continue. The minutes of the Council indicate that the decision was a drastic one, that no more presents of any sort were to be given the Indians in the St. Augustine area.¹¹ The secretary of the Council was ordered to transmit this decision to White in the form of a Royal Order at the earliest possible opportunity. The necessary dispatch was drawn up on June 22 but unfortunately a copy does not appear in any of the sources investigated.¹² Later on, however, when White acknowledged the receipt of this Royal Order, he made reference to it stating that he interpreted it to mean the "prohibiting further presents being granted to the Indians."¹³

9. Minute of the Secretary of Dispatch of the Royal Treasury, June 16, 1797, attached to White to Gardoqui, St. Augustine, January 20, 1797, *op. cit.*
10. Second Minute of the Secretary of Dispatch of the Royal Treasury, June 16, 1797, attached to White to Gardoqui, St. Augustine, January 20, 1797, *op. cit.*
11. Minutes of the Council of State, June 16, 1797, attached to White to Gardoqui, St. Augustine, January 20, 1797, *op. cit.*
12. The original letter of White to Gardoqui has the notation on the last page, "done on the 22nd of the same month," after the cryptic note of the action of the Council.
13. White to Prince of the Peace, St. Augustine, December 4, 1797, Archivo Historico Nacional: Estado, *legajo* 3890 *bis*.

The arrival of the Royal Order of June 22 late in November only added to White's uncertainty for instead of obtaining royal approval for a gradual reduction in the expenses of Indian presents, he was confronted with directions to eliminate all such charges to the Royal Treasury. This was far more than he had bargained for, and, according to his views, was a highly dangerous step to take. Consultation with his military advisor and legal officer helped him not at all for this authority, quite naturally, urged him to obey the terms of the Royal Order to the letter and then, and only then, to send an appeal to the King, setting forth the dangers inherent in depriving the Indians of the customary annual present. This advice did not please the governor as he could foresee Indian troubles brewing for a whole year while he waited for his appeal to reach Spain, for action by the Council of State, and for a reply to return to St. Augustine.

Avoiding the possibility of an Indian uprising in the province was more important than absolute obedience to a royal command, or at least so the governor expressed himself to believe. On November 27 the provincial secretary was ordered to call a special session of the Governor's Council to meet in emergency session as a *Junta de Guerra*, or Council of War, to consider White's views on future action in the matter of Indian presents. After reading the Royal Order of June 22 and recalling to mind all previous actions taken that year, White outlined his objection to instituting a complete cessation of present giving. He then requested each of the five council members to present his opinion. Apparently all agreed with the governor except Gonzalo Zamorano, the military advisor, who once again repeated the need for absolute obedience to the sovereign will of the King. The *Junta* debated the matter further before agreeing with one dissenting vote to second White's proposal to reduce but not cut off the annual present to the Indians. A memorandum was then prepared to be sent to the King, setting forth in great detail the reasons for the Council's action contrary to the terms of the Royal Order. All six members including the governor then signed the report and the meeting was adjourned.¹⁴ The governor prepared a long dispatch in defense

14. It was customary in meetings of this sort that all members of the Council sign a report including those who were in opposition since their signatures merely made the report official but did not constitute approval of the contents. Their dissenting views were already incorporated in the body of the text.

of his actions which he forwarded to Spain on December 4 together with a copy of the minutes of the *Junta* Session of November 27.¹⁵

What the immediate reaction of the royal government may have been cannot be determined from the documents consulted for White's dispatch of December 4 merely bears the cryptic notation, "sin minuta," which apparently meant that it was filed away for future reference. Two things are certain, however, for the annual present to the Indians was continued although on a reduced scale, and Enrique White remained as governor of East Florida until his death some fourteen years later. It might be worth noting that several Spanish sources later on indicated that the royal government considered White to be the most efficient and capable governor appointed after the retrocession in 1783.

This episode although of limited importance and local in nature, does indicate that the charges of inefficiency and lack of initiative often aimed at Spanish colonial officials in the later years of the Bourbon period are not entirely valid. Here was a governor willing to risk his entire career by refusing to obey a royal command when he believed that in so doing he would endanger the safety of the territory under his control. He deemed it worth while to place his personal knowledge of the local situation and his long experience with Indians in the balance against what he considered to be an unwise policy developed in the council chambers several thousand miles removed from East Florida. It appears that in the long run White's views were vindicated.

The following documents contain many details of the story not included in this introductory sketch. Microfilm of photostatic copies of the original document were used. These are in the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, the Florida Historical Society Library, and the Library of Congress.

Documents

A

(A translation of a portion of a letter from Enrique White to Luis de Las Casas, St. Augustine, August 24, 1796, Archivo General de Indias: Papeles de Cuba, legajo 1439).

15. White to Prince of Peace, St. Augustine, December 4, 1797, *op. cit.*

Among the Indians who hitherto have come here, I have recognized some who received their presents in Pensacola and believing the same to be true also of those seen in Apalache, I thought that it might be pleasing to Your Excellency, if it is convenient, that in the very briefest time possible, it be established to which tribe each belongs who is entitled to take his annual present here, with the belief that such foresight will, without doubt, bring benefits of many thousands of pesos to the Royal Treasury . . .

B

(Translation of an appendix attached to Document A, and located in the same source.)

Report that specifies the ordinary present that has hitherto been given to the Indians, with distinctions as to their classes.

To a Chieftain

A woolen blanket, a woolen shirt, three cuartas¹⁶ of course woolen cloth, one and one-half varas¹⁷ of plain, inferior cloth, a pair of garters containing three varas of woolen stripping, a looking-glass, a large knife, a plough handle, a shaving razor, a hand axe, two ounces of vermilion, two bundles of tobacco each a pound in weight, two small casks of spirits each of eight bottles, six pounds of powder, eight pounds of shot, eighteen pieces of flint.

To a Warrior

A woolen blanket, a plain shirt, one and one-half varas of plain, inferior cloth, a pair of garters containing three varas of woolen stripping, a looking-glass, a plough handle, a large knife, a shaving razor, an ounce of vermilion, a bundle of tobacco weighing a pound, a small cask of spirits of eight bottles, four pounds of powder, six pounds of shot, nine pieces of flint.

16. A cuarta is a measure of length equal to a "hand" or eight inches.

17. A vara is a measure of length equal to 2.78 feet.

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To a Woman

Two and one-half varas of linen, five varas of woolen stripping, three curtas of velveteen, one and one-half varas of Siresa,¹⁸ a looking-glass, a little collection of glass beads, ten needles, a thimble, a skein of yarn.

To a Youth

Two varas of linen, one and one-half varas of inferior cloth, a small trumpet.

To a Girl

One vara of Siresa, one and one-half varas of inferior cloth.

The day of the arrival of the Indians, and as long as they are in the Plaza¹⁹ which ordinarily is four or five days, they are each served with a pound of bread, a bottle of refined honey, and a pound of rice. They are also given on the first day a little tobacco and some clay pipes in proportion to the number of men in the party that is present. In the same manner they are served with the same ration on the day of their departure: to those from the provinces or seven or eight days, to the Seminoles for three, four or five days, with consideration to the length of the walk they have to make to return to their homes. In the aforementioned ordinary present is not included those [items] that the governor specially ordered to be given such as guns, saddles, iron and copper kettles, tin-plate, flour, spurs, spades, hatchets, hats, nails, pieces of Irish lace, coats of fine cloth, and whatever other items the Governor held convenient to hand over at the continuous petitions of the Indians. St. Augustine, Florida, July 18, 1796. Fernando de la Maza Arredondo.²⁰

18. Siresa or Sarasa is a variety of woolen cloth, named after a monastery in Huesca, Spain.

19. This refers to St. Augustine.

20. Fernando de la Maza Arredondo, Senior, was a prosperous merchant in St. Augustine and was often employed by Governor White in a semi-official capacity. In this particular case since Arredondo sometimes supplied trade goods for the annual present to the Indians, he was able to give the necessary specific information desired by White.

C

(Enrique White to Diego de Gardoqui, St. Augustine, January 20, 1797, Archivo General de Indias: Santo Domingo, legajo 2644.)

Since the start of this settlement presents have been supplied to numbers of Indians who have presented themselves with petitions. His Majesty has set aside 10,000 pesos annually to cover the declared expenses. There are few savages who belong to this district. Almost all receive annually the customary friendship in Pensacola and Apalache. I have recognized here various Indians who it is obvious to me collect their presents in those named places, and with this matter [in mind] I consulted the Captain General who is over this province, as to what was convenient [to do] on August 24th last, and he replied to me on the subsequent October 25th to [go on] operating with prudence in this matter in order not to antagonize the savages during the present circumstances of being [in the process of] running the boundary line. During my residence in Pensacola where I was Commandant, I examined with care the quality of the annual present assigned to the Indians, and I have observed that that which is supplied here is considerably superior [in amount] and I hope it pleases Your Excellency to put this notice in its entirety before the King and to advise me whether or not it will be convenient to his royal approbation to diminish [the amount], to the benefit of the Royal Treasury, with delays, care and moderation, involved in this business, in accordance to [what I am] given to understand is the 5th Article of the Treaty of amity concluded recently with the United States. Likewise I beg Your Excellency to have the kindness to find out for me that which may receive the approbation of the Sovereign in reference to whether or not the annual presents are to be given to the savages who bring themselves here, belonging to the districts of Pensacola and Apalache, as mentioned before. I hope that my zeal for the better service of my Royal Master, the sincere desire that always motivates me to reduce without prejudice the expenses of his treasury, and a course of conduct such as I have proposed to observe in the matter as I have mentioned, that they may all merit the priceless approbation of His Majesty. Enrique White.

D

(Minute of the secretary of Dispatch of the Royal Treasury, June 16, 1797, attached to Document C, and located in the same source.)

He sets forth that which he proposes in regard to reducing the presents to the Indians in consideration that some of those who received them in that Presidio have [already] taken them as well in Pensacola.

 E

(Second Minute of the Secretary of Dispatch of the Royal Treasury, June 16, 1797, attached to Document C, and located in the same source.)

Submitting that from the establishment of that Presidio presents have been given to certain Indians at their request, and for the expenses of these there was set aside 10,000 pesos annually. White says that there are few savages who belong to his district since nearly all [of these] this year have acquired the friendly custom recently with the United States. Likewise he hopes that he be informed as to what to do, that is, whether or not he has to administer the present to the savages who present themselves here who belong to the districts of Pensacola and Apalache.

Note

As the Indians do not have regularly a fixed residence as they move about according as it seems to please them, it is not strange the information that the governor communicates, that some of them are receiving duplicate presents in Pensacola and in Florida. Notwithstanding before trying to diminish [that amount] as he indicates, he believes that in this business it is opportune to seek advice from the Captain General of these provinces, sufficient for all the disturbances concerning which this business is susceptible, particularly since the demarcation line with the United States is concluded, since the letter of White does not manifest all the

knowledge that is necessary concerning whatever changes [are needed] in a matter so important in that country.

F

(Minutes of the Council of State, June 16, 1797, attached to Document C, and located in the same source.)

The purpose the King had [in mind] when he made this treaty in stopping these assistances [to the Indians] was not a minor point of interest [to him], and His Majesty absolutely does not approve any more expenses [such as] those made since that date.

G

(Enrique White to the Prince of the Peace, St. Augustine, December 4, 1797, Archivo Historico Nacional: Estado, legajo 3890 bis.)

Since my entry to the command of this government, my first object has been to relieve the Royal Treasury of the exorbitant expenses that crush it, and in truth, I have succeeded in lessening the diverse disbursements. But Royal authority was necessary to execute one of the principle points of the elimination as I intended. It is my desire that if His Majesty approves my taking some convenient foresight, [I will] cooperate with the chief officials at Pensacola and Apalache in order that there may be established with full understanding on the part of all a sure and effective method which may reduce radically the abuses of the Indians in taking duplicate presents in those places and here in the east. With this idea in mind I proposed it in Number 11, Index 5, [dated] January 21 last, and this [new] proposal I have derived from the Sovereign resolution of the past June 22 prohibiting further presents being granted to the Indians. The spirit that always has animated me for the better service of our Sovereign and the desire to maintain the tranquility and prosperity of those who are under my immediate orders, have been objects

that I have never lost from sight, and are the same that now present me with the most disagreeable dilemma of whether not to fulfill *in toto* the will of the King, or whether to disturb the quiet of this province and lessen in part the authority of His Majesty in it, since at the first violent attack of the Indians the population will abandon their homes seeking the protection of this fortress. With this obvious knowledge [in mind] and seeking a prudent solution that accomplishes both goals, I convoked a *Junta de Guerra* in which I outlined the aforecited Royal Order and explained the motives that obliged me to call the meeting. It was agreed not to suspend [the giving of] all the presents but instead to diminish them little by little sharing with His Majesty this decision reached on the present occasion, and sending Your Excellency a copy of the proceedings of the *Junta*.

Most Excellent Sir, the fears that I set forth to the King are not mere tokens fabricated by an exalted fantasy or originating from a faint-hearted spirit, but rather are the fears of the impending harm and immediate dangers that I see threatening the province upon the complete suspension of the presents. The practical knowledge I have of these barbarians obtained not only during the command of this aforementioned province but also in the time that I was commander at Pensacola, enables me to speak with authority on the fatal results that may be expected. The ease with which the province and the Indian Nations can be crossed today is due exclusively to the presents that assist in better administration, and the oldest Spanish inhabitants who live in it (province), [are] witnesses of the freedom [of movement] and tranquility that exists today. When they were formerly restricted to the vicinity of the town, they were never free from their (Indians') cruelties. In truth there are no habitations more than ten leagues away that did not find themselves marked with their (Indians') atrocious deeds; and documents about these [acts] are to be found in the governmental archives and memories [still linger] in the recollection of its natives. The Indian is a lying character, given over to robbery during peacetime; [he is] revengeful to the extreme; and although uncultured [he is] of a refined cunning nature in carrying out his bloody projects. It is necessary to employ greatest caution, prudence and suffrance in order not to break [off] with them completely. I need exhibit no more evidence as proof than the last understanding that was

made with the United States when they (Indians) were finally worn out by a war which ruined their agriculture and restricted their domicile, and they (United States) availed themselves with the greatest vigor imaginable to draw them (Indians) to reason. And though peace was brought about, I have been informed that this did not stop them (United States) from keeping their (Indians') favor with presents, having agents [there] to do this. The giving of them (presents) is not as burdensome to them (United States) as it is to Spain since they buy the goods that they expend as presents to the Indians for the account of the state at [nothing but] their original price. The reply of His Excellency Don Luis de Las Casas falls back on my advice that I indicated in my aforementioned declaration to His Majesty about the danger [that exists] in displeasing the Indians, especially at the time when the dividing line with the Americans has not yet been run. I do not doubt that it will be of great advantage to the Crown to curtail and annul this annual charge for presents; but at the same time permit me to say to Your Excellency with the due prudence and humble freedom I owe, and that alone is what moves me, that the command that the King in his compassion has condescended to give me seems to me not to be suitable to be carried out immediately. At all times continued experience has demonstrated that an attempt to eradicate quickly habitual usage and age-old custom, cannot be brought about without commotion and great disturbance. These motives and the representations in the *Junta* have compelled me not to follow the dictates of my military advisor, and all the more so when the dangers that are foreseen do not lessen without reason, and he only raises a prospect of imaginary reasoning. It is necessary to have a bold and credulous understanding in order to comprehend what might pass as sufficient pretexts that might quiet the Indians, to tell them there are not supplies of presents and victuals [for them] when they consider these (presents) the same as those of the king, then they are disposed to avenge themselves on all in the vicinity. Their nature is not so temperate nor of a temperament so credulous, and such an excuse will serve only to animate them with more vigor to carry on, seeing the falseness with which [we] were trying to delude them openly. Certainly there does not exist any other harmonious means [to avoid] notwithstanding that he alledged

other prudent excuses, and when I asked him what they were, he merely said that it was the will of His Majesty and that I ought to obey. If the will of the King behooves me [to act] upon a legislative action, or if he orders me to fulfill it without either a reply or advice, immediately I will be judged [to be] a disobedient vassal, one not giving orders for good government and prudent management the most complete obedience. But at no time is it the intent of the benevolent heart of His Majesty that by obedience in fulfilling [orders] there results great prejudice to the Crown and [its] vassals, but rather that it is agreeable [to him] that I might delay and explain without passion.

If selfishness, Excellent Sir, was one of my chief passions, without doubt nothing would have been decided upon except as [I was] ordered. My person would feel free of the results of their (Indians') barbarities since I have judged their forces insufficient to bother this Plaza. But a sad picture is projected into my imagination of the unhappy fortune of so many of the inhabitants. To see their belongings, houses, graneries and slaves burned up or stolen, their families killed or suffering the most cruel miseries, my view of this terrible catastrophe, I beg Your Excellency to represent it to the King, interposing your favorable and powerful influence, to raise these added considerations to the benign heart of our Sovereign to the end that he may deign to approve that which was resolved in the *Junta de Guerra*. May the Lord guard Your Excellency for many years. St. Augustine, Florida, December 4, 1797. Enrique White.

(An Appendix enclosed in Document G, and found
in the same source.)

H

In the *Junta de Guerra* held today in the citadel of His Majesty that serves as habitation for the governing officers of this plaza and the province of East Florida, at which there met the President, Enrique White, Colonel of the Royal Army, Governor and Commander General of this aforementioned plaza and province; and as voting members, Bartolome Morales, Brevet Colonel

and Commander of the 3d Batallion of the Regiment of Cuba; Pedro Diaz Berrio, Second Engineer and Commander; Juan de los Remedios, Captain Commander of the Corps of Royal Artillery; Gonzalo Zamorano, Accountant of the Royal Treasury and Military Counsellor already mentioned by the President. After having read the Royal Order of last June in which it is ordered forthwith not to make presents hereafter to the Indians, the aforementioned officer expressed [the view] that it behooved [us] to carry out this sovereign resolution because of its representation. However, [he said] that a dispatch [should be] directed to His Majesty indicating the abuse that there might be in repeating presents since the Indians who harassed Pensacola and Apalache were doing the same thing in this province, and including the following points: that taking into consideration the great and grave dangers that the total suspension of the presents that have been given liberally up to now will cause in the present state of the war, namely uniting them (Indians) with the English for whom they always have kept a certain affection which they have only for those who give them presents; that the inhabitants who find themselves scattered because of the vastness of the province will not have a secure life; that this action will be one that will produce for us the greatest hostilities on the part of these savages, as formerly was experienced when this province was Spanish; that the supplying of this plaza with the greater part of the cattle which are bought from the Indians will cease and also as a consequence the agreement which is established with advantage to the Royal Treasury for the supply of the troops employed here and the peasantry, [and they will have] to maintain themselves with salted meat brought from Havana; that also of the weaknesses that the continuing use of that will cause, suffice this staple to be wanting in the really critical circumstances because of the continuing blockade experienced because of the corsairs from Providence and the ships of war that cruise about within our sight, and besides ruining us, they (Indians) pillage our few cattle; that likewise to mention the only recourse that there was at present, I have had to send some experienced person promptly, crossing the province and the Indian Nations to Tampa Bay located on the Gulf of Mexico in order to advise Havana with one of the fishing boats that are apt to carry to that destination news of

what occurs and to seek there provisions; and they declared that they found the port blockaded, something that happens frequently, and for that reason in the last war with the French, two little ships were kept there in the Bay by order of His Excellency, the Captain General of the Island of Cuba, and at the request of my predecessor, Brigadier Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada; that an increased part of the population retires to the city abandoning homes in spite of having no real motive at the present, and the families that have settled themselves at the Mosquitoes are affected by the threats of death and robbery by which they fear [to be] overwhelmed; that it will be against the development and populating of this province which His Majesty so much desires and which he has charged by various Royal Orders; and lastly that besides causing the greatest misery and consternation to the province, the Indian Nations will become the refuge of the runaway Negro slaves and free Negroes, of the deserting and criminal soldiers who will incite the savages with vehemence to commit hostilities against our people. I informed the gathered officials of these very evident reasons, reconciling as much as possible the desire of His Majesty with the tranquility of the inhabitants of this city, and bearing in mind that in the humane heart of His Majesty the love of his vassals always is more predominant than any prejudice to his royal interests that might result. In view of all of this, the aforementioned President and assembled officials resolved and agreed on the following point: That the free giving out of presents that until now has been carried on with the Indians should not be suspended entirely, but the number of presents should be diminished gradually. An account of their decision should be given His Majesty, indicating it (decision) was taken only for the purpose of the best service of the King and for the felicity of his vassals living here [giving attention] at the same time to the Royal Orders that demanded the holding and developing of the greatest harmony with the Indians who will submit only by force or by presents.

This decision was against the opinion of the Military Advisor who expressed [the opinion] that the Royal Order should be carried out implicitly and the Indians put off, giving as the motive, the shortage of food and trade goods and other prudent excuses, and sending this to His Majesty as the decision of the *Junta*.

All that which is agreed to by the cited President and assembled officials . . . I certify, Juan de Pierra, as interim secretary of the government and commandancy-general, and also of the *juntas* of this sort in St. Augustine, Florida, November 27, 1797 . . . Enrique White. . . Bartolome Morales. . . Pedro Diaz Berrio . . . Juan de los Remedios. . . Gonzalo Zamorano. . . Francisco de Abreu. . . Juan de Pierra.

This is a copy of the original that exists in my care in this provisional secretariat St. Augustine, Florida, November 28, 1797. . . Juan de Pierra.