

Minutes of 2nd conference with Oneida Indians,
August 14th, 1917. Convened at 2 P. M.

1917

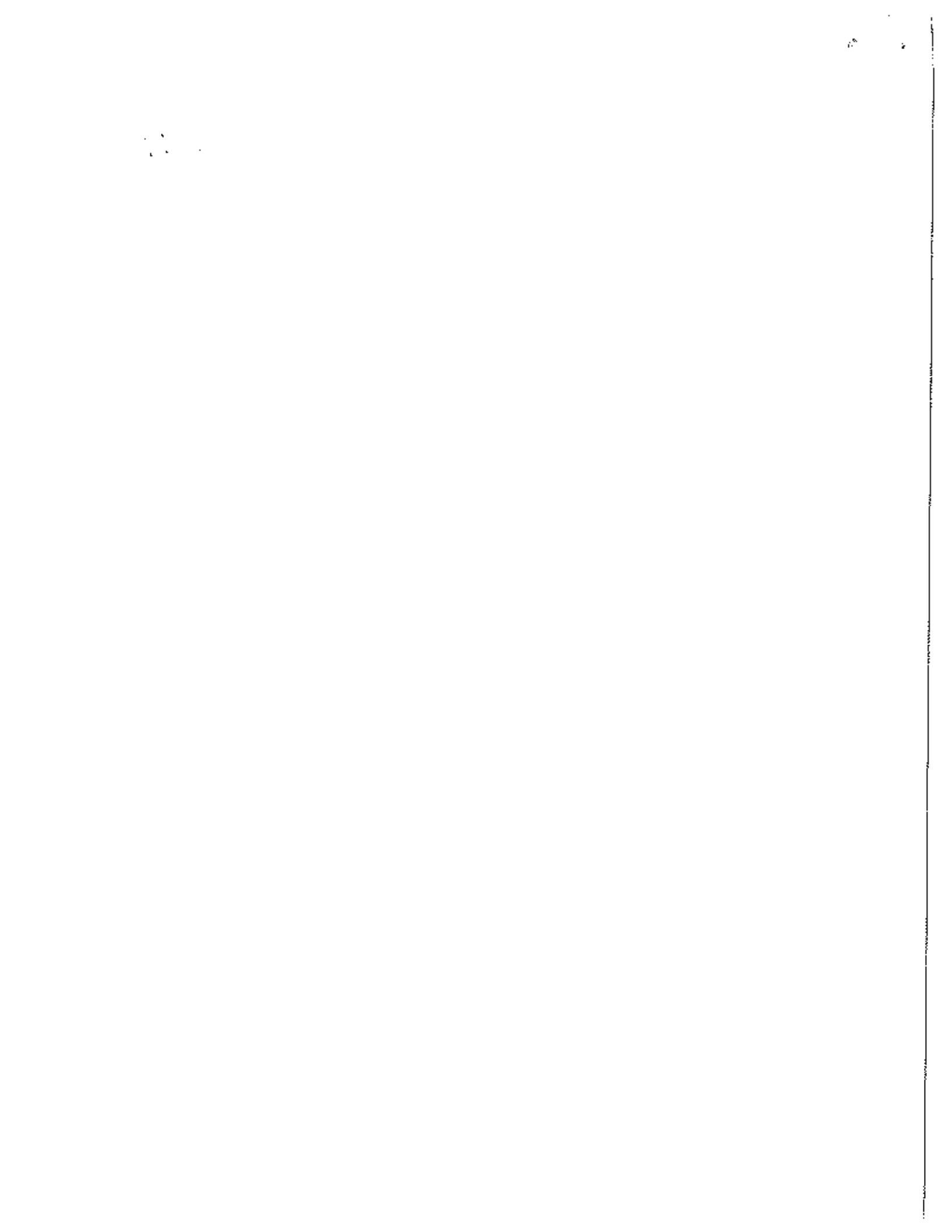
.....

INSPECTOR McLAUGHLIN: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

My friends, Mr. Henry Dextater called upon us last Friday and requested that we meet the Oneidas in conference again, as they desired to talk with us further, presumably with reference to the work we are now engaged upon on your reservation, and to meet that request we are here and ready to listen to what you may have to state or submit, and desire to now hear from you.

MR. SAMPSON J. CORNELIUS: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

Honorable Commission, I am going to try to say a few words before you. It has been customary to have the government send its representatives to us to investigate different things, but it always seems they haven't got the power to listen to anything except what they come here for. They come for some little thing about that big and we have many grievances which we would like to present and when we try



to present them, it is beyond their power to listen to them.

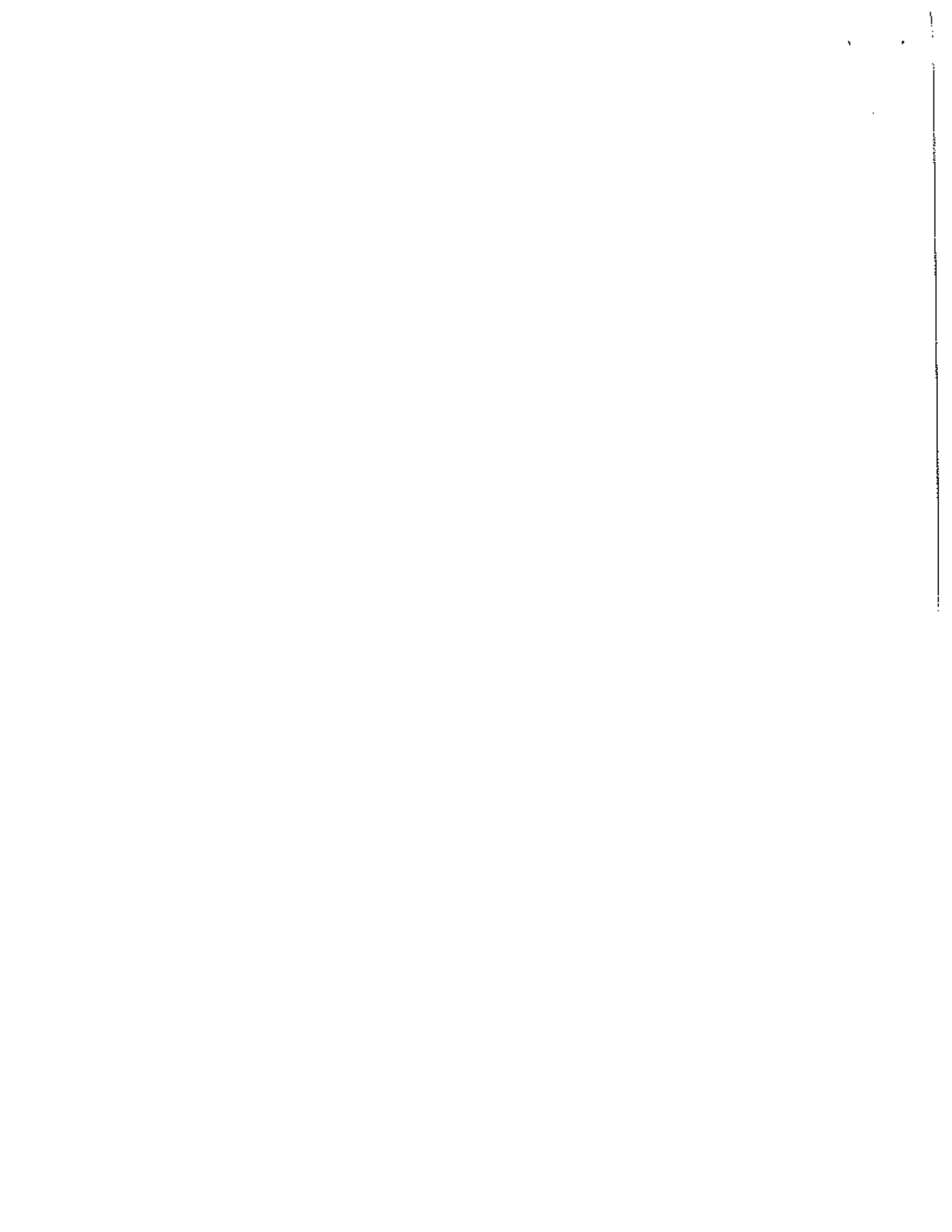
I am glad that this opportunity has been given to us to express our opinion as to how we should be managed. I want to say that we are not as intelligent as our white friends, as our white friends around here. There has always been a feeling on their part that we don't belong here, we are not what we ought to be. In 1906 by a special act of Congress we were allowed to sell our lands, and whatever we were offered we were about compelled to take. The same men, the same speculators are buying thousands and thousands of acres of land right here and that is one mistake, I believe, on the part of the government for allowing such things to be carried on. It should never have allowed it.

And so we hereby present you this petition, which we place on file with you.

Petition filed as "Exhibit C".

JOHN ARCHICUETTE: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

I want to say a few words. I shall try not to say much because your time is valuable.



I am glad that you gave us this opportunity again to speak about the things which have been spoken about before and we are going to try and express our opinion, which we think is right, and we hope that it would be a help to you and we think it will be a help to you.

I am not opposing to the laws of the white man. I think they have good laws, but still we find that those who are living under those laws there are two classes. One class of people are those that seem to be progressing and the others are that class of people who can't seem to get along under those laws. The laws are too strong for them, I might say, and I have often thought which class do we belong and I always say to myself that we would belong to the poor class of people as soon as we adopted the laws of the white man.

I feel sure that the commission and the department want to help us as much as they can by allowing us to manage our own affairs as other people are managing their own affairs, but we must go slow with this business because we are getting



along pretty fairly well now as we are. Now, take for instance you balance a couple loads or anything. You overload a thing, it is going to give way under its weight and that is just about the way that we are going to take this. If it is forced upon us to get our deeds that load will be too heavy and we are going to fall under that load.

There are men right here in our neighborhood who tell us that it is the greatest thing for us to do, to take up the laws of the ^{white} man. Not only men among us, but speculators from outside say that it is the best thing for us, but the way we look at it, as we see it it is not the best thing for us. Now, we see right here how those have gotten along that have got the patents in fee, how they have gotten along. They do not get along as well as they ought to. I do not claim that we are not progressing. We are progressing to a certain extent, slowly but we are going towards the goal, so why would we take them? Give us more time, because we are surely progressing without getting our patents in fee simple. I know that you do not agree with our ideas because it appears to you that we are holding backwards, trying to take a step backwards, but such is not the case.

We are trying to go forward and we are going forward. And if such a thing as fee simple patent is thrown upon us now, we would simply go backwards for the simple reason that we haven't got the experience that others have had and in a short time we would be what you call gypsies, going about from one place to another. Once in a while you see smoke going up by the roadside. That would be our camp; that would be our stopping place for the night. I feel sure that we would only go backwards instead of forward as we are doing now. We may not be progressing as fast as one would like to see us but still we are going forward and we are trying to.

In the old times when a man comes down from Washington to Oneida, the people used to get so scared because the white man has always had the power and whatever he said always went, and they simply stood before him and trembled. They couldn't say anything. It is the same way today, about the same way. We sit here. We don't tremble, but we don't seem to have anymore to say. Therefore, I desire to express myself as I see it and as I think it will happen.

Take things slowly and do the right

thing with us and I am sure that we will some day come up to the mark that you have laid out for us.

Now, these schools. Would they be taken away from us and we can't teach our own children. We can't give them an education, the education they ought to have, and it is not because I want to hold them back, I want to stay back. My aim is to live right and to live according to law as any civilized man would and ought to live. I try to but I can't. I can't do it because I haven't had the experience and that is one reason why I don't wish at this time that such a thing should be thrust upon us. I hope that the commission will take this up with the department and make them understand the way we have expressed ourselves here and as we would like to have them understand it. I would ask that the commission do all within their power to have the department understand us we would like to have them understand and give us another trial. Let us remain as we are. It would be to our satisfaction and we think it would be to the satisfaction of the department.

Our forefathers have always taken part

whenever it became necessary to defend the flag of the United States. They have always stood by Uncle Sam from the beginning and they have never given any trouble to the United States. They have always been peaceful people and that is one reason why I believe that the department ought to consider our wishes, giving us our wishes, for the reason that our people have always been a peaceful class of people.

THOMAS G. CORNELIUS:

I want to say a few words but I ask you to excuse my broken English, so I 'aint got much to say. I may say something a little too strong, as I mean it.

The first thing is this little party here needs your help. We need your help at the present time. I don't think we smart and wise to hold back this trust patent because we thought we not smart enough. That is why. That is one reason we don't wishes to go any further; and again, our people who got patent deed, they all lost. A good

many of them got nothing to show. I don't believe your government so anxious to force this people, the great majority, to that step. It is because all this officers that are forcing that we all take patent deed. Now, that special delegation go to Washington from this town officers, they use Oneida names. I don't run them down, but I say it is wrong to call themselves Oneida delegation to go to Washington. It 'aint Oneida. It is all citizens. It is no Indians. So I say those few men, it is not proper. Not only that, but they had no business to make any statement to force this holding patent deed. Before they got that they all had to accept it or extend it ten years time. Already two men been here in month of March or April, something like that. So I am very sorry to say that they make such statement that all going to get patent deed.

Because last meeting here, I say it is around us all discouraged, every side. So it seems to be not in our favor; that is why we need help. We need help, this little party here. We are getting all old people. Maybe they won't any of us live any longer than, say twenty years,



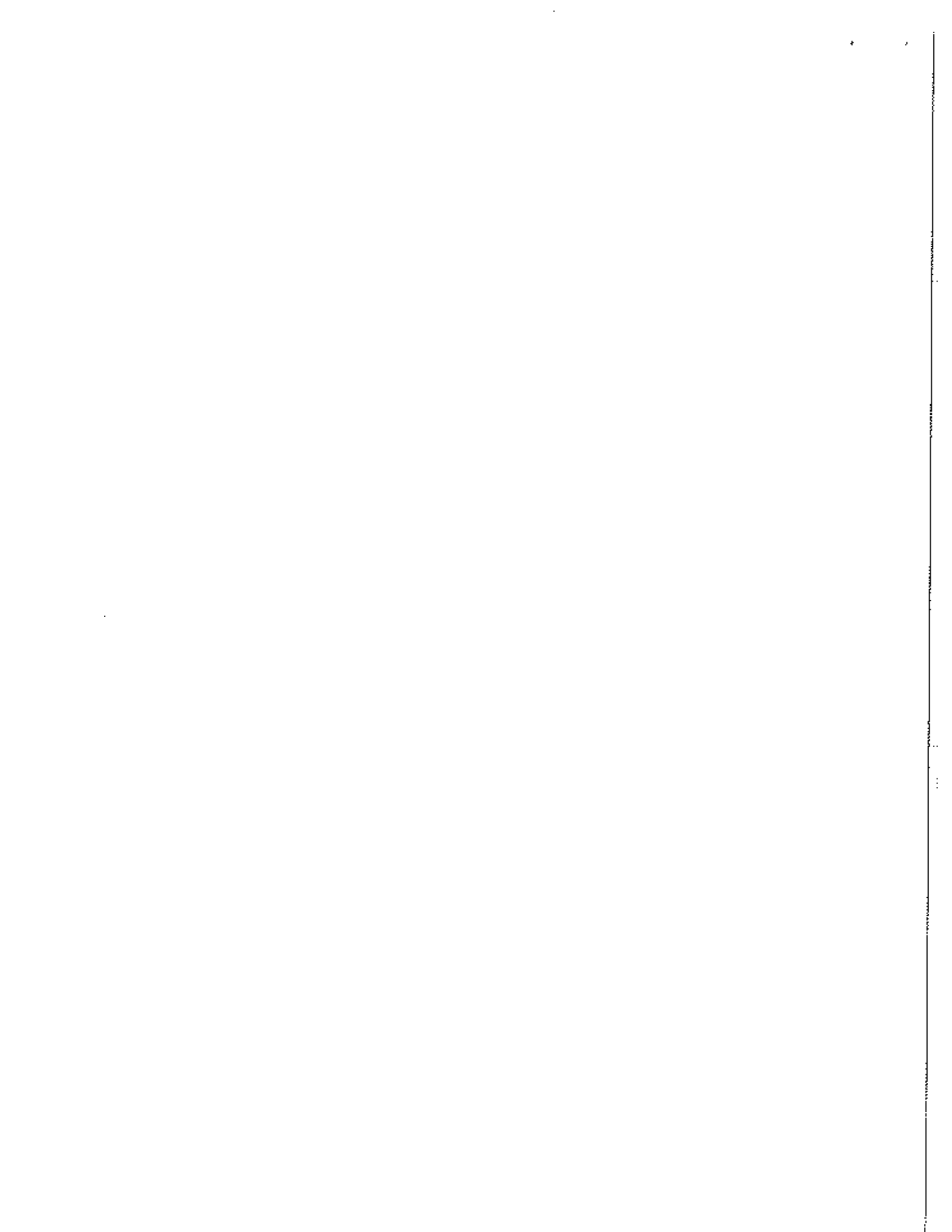
though some of them young men have trust patents.
Twenty years then maybe we all cleaned up anyway.

So now, we ask you to give us extend
trust time, say ten years. Maybe ten years we
all be gone, so that ought to be done. I think
that is about all I got to say. Perhaps it don't
help us no matter how much we cry before this
gentlemen.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

I want to thank the commission for
allowing us this opportunity to say . . . something.
I would like to ask this commission if they know
what the report is that was turned in last spring
by the commission that were here at that time con-
cerning our affairs.

I understand that when the delegation
that went from here to Washington, they opposed
the report made by the commission that were here
last spring, and a member of that delegation was
a white man. He had nothing to do with our af-



airs, with Indian affairs, and there were other members of the delegation that were also citizens. There was nothing between them and the government. The relation is all come out from them and yet they went up there and opposed the reports as presented by the former commission. Because they opposed the report of the former commission, then the report was not accepted, and is it the purpose of this commission here now to investigate our affairs here?

As we understand it, the reason of the high taxes is because we trust patent holders are not paying taxes on our land and we must get all the whole blame for it. As a matter of fact, we have nothing to do with the high taxes. They themselves created the high taxes. You have probably gone around the reservation quite a little since you have been here and specially the western part of the reservation. You have seen good roads built right through the woods, expensive roads. That is the cause of the high taxes. There are other things I could point to you that have made the high taxes in our town. They them-



olves created the high taxes and we did not. As a matter of fact, we had no word in it, and I want to thank the commission that they have given us this opportunity to express our thoughts again. Possibly what I have said isn't just exactly what ought to be heard here, but I thank the commission.

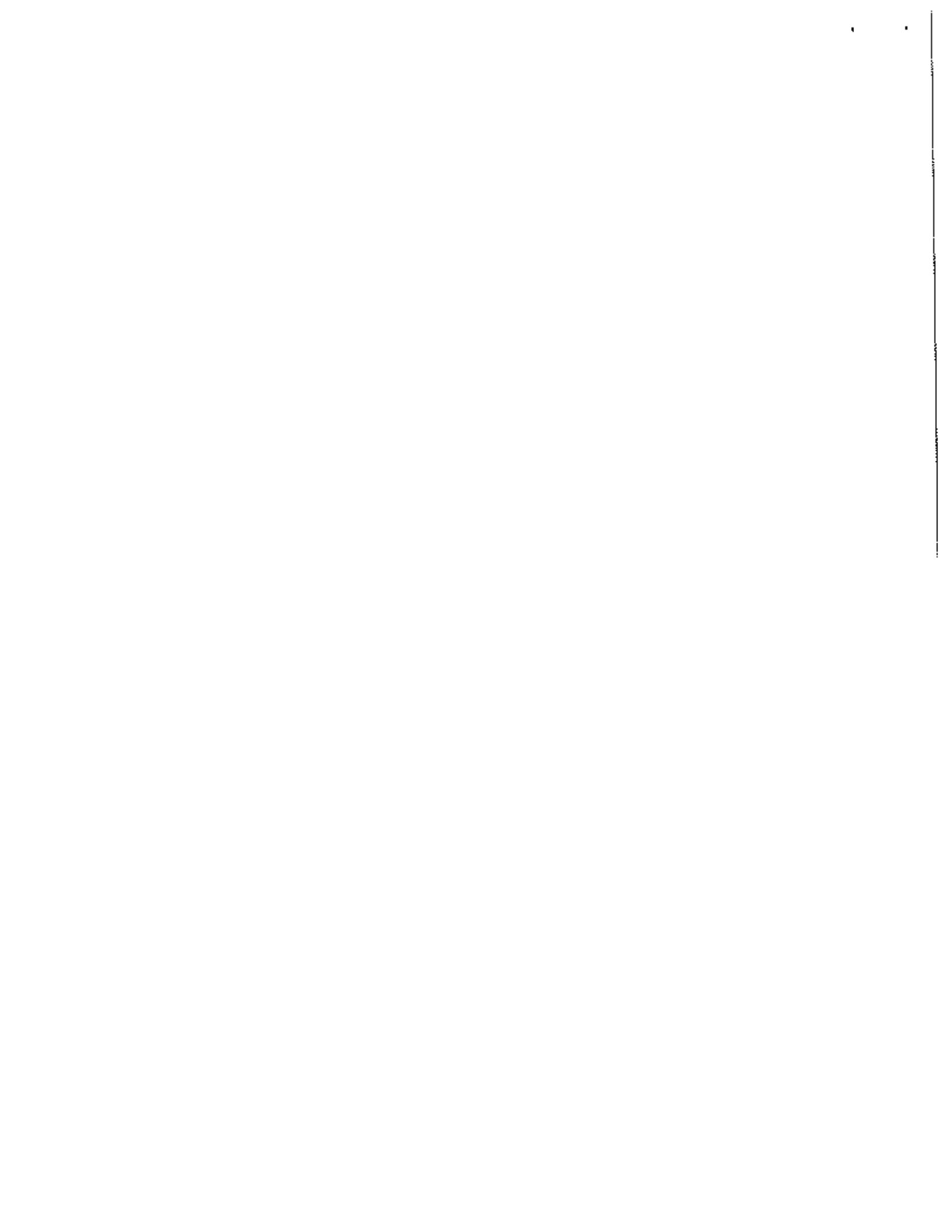
SAMPSON STEVENS: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

I stand here as a full blooded Oneida and not able to speak English, but as I understand it the claim is made that we do not pay any taxes towards the upbuilding of the roads. Now, I myself am paying taxes to help build these roads and I work on the roads myself. The commission have probably sized me up as one competent to manage my own affairs and they have seen me working. They have seen my works and in their opinion, I am competent to become a citizen, but I want to say that I am afraid of the land speculators. As I am now, they have no chance to get the best of me. If I was to get a deed to my land, then the chances would be good. Now, there has been members of

the tribe here who are encouraging us to get our
deeds and they are the educated class of people.
Educated young people and it seems that they are
hungry. They want to get a little job here to
sell land; it may be so that they will be able to
get their next meal, but as I see now they have no
chance to get the best of me.

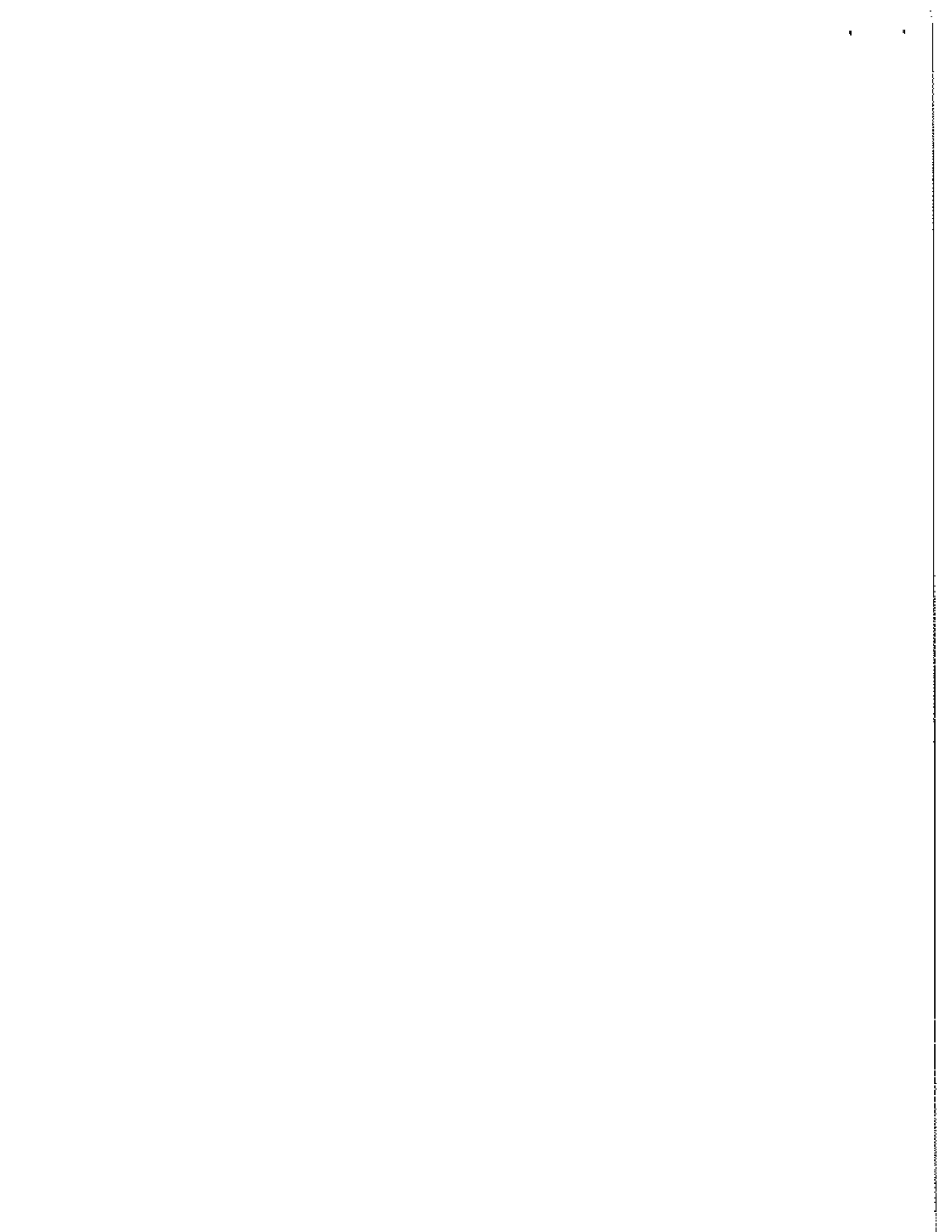
NICHOLAS ELLI; (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

At the last meeting of the council, I
was made to understand or I got the impression that
the commission were authorized to come here and ex-
amine each person as to what they are doing, as to
their competency. I was under the impression at
that time that I had no word to say and if I did
have a word to say, it wouldn't be any use to say it.
I didn't say anything at that time but I have thought
a great deal since that time and I have come to think
there is still a chance because the government has
always been fair with us and has promised to deal
fair with us, and as a matter of fact, it has dealt
fair with us, it has given us a fair chance. It



has given us twenty-five years since to work on our lands and it also said that at the end of twenty-five years, it would come again and see how we are getting along, to see if we are competent to manage our own affairs, and the government is not only to look on her side of the view, but on the Indian's side, too. If the Indian thinks he is competent, he asks for his deed and it will be given him, and if the government thinks that he is competent and the Indian does not think so, why there will be a question, and all we would ask would be for a fair chance. I don't wish to get my deed to my property for the reason that I am just about getting along fairly well. I couldn't get along any better and the reason for that is that I am not compelled to pay taxes yet.

The delegation that went from here to Washington seemed to be headed by a white man. They went before the department and laid the whole thing before them on just one side of the view. That was the trust patent holders' side. They said, they were not tax payers; they don't help to carry the expenses of the town, but they did not lay before



the department how the other people are getting along. These that had gotten their deeds. They seemed to be hidden.

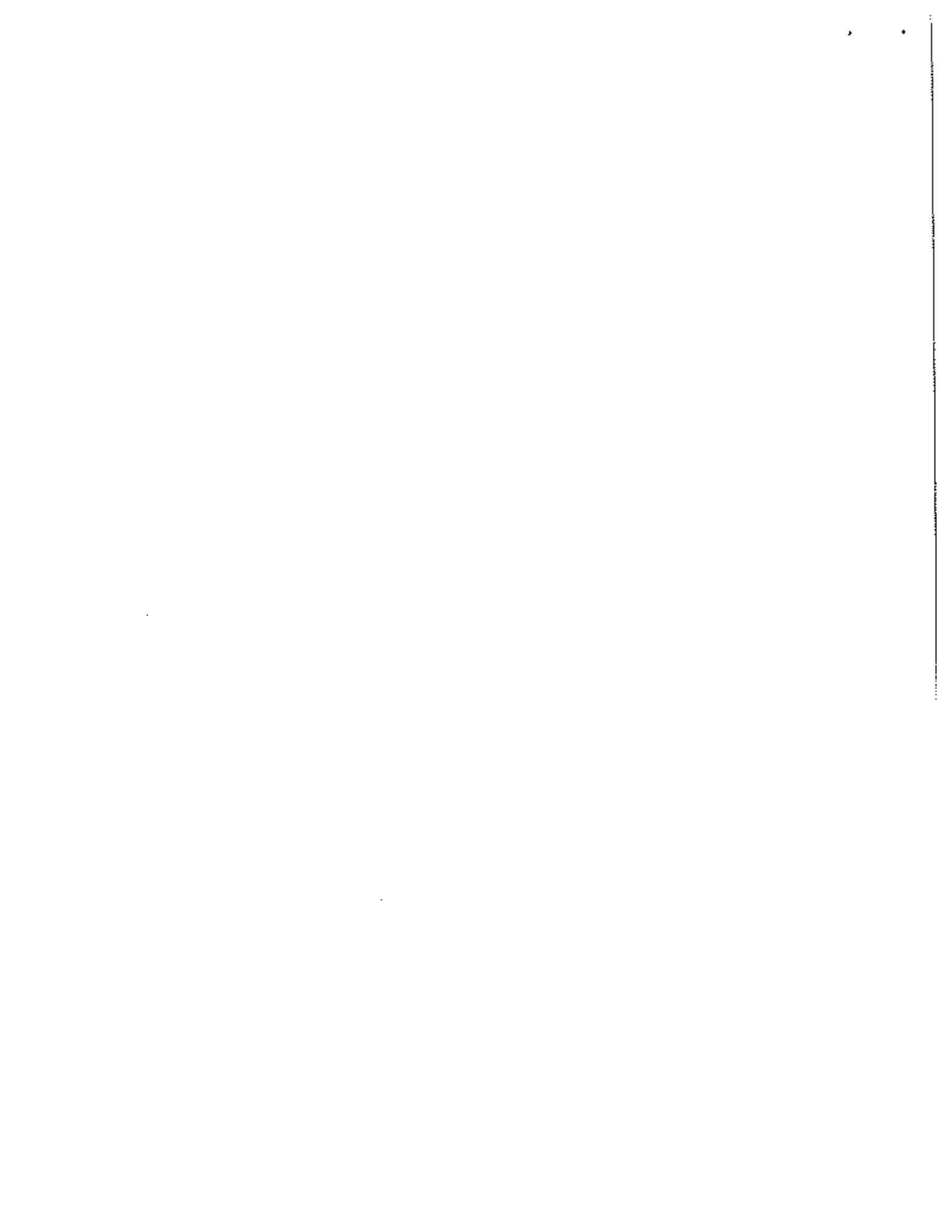
Today I am not as competent to become a citizen as I was twenty-five years ago for the reason that I am the same man, but I am not as strong physically as I was twenty-five years ago and to force me to take the deed to my property would simply be to take the reins from my hands. I like the rules of the government which we live under. Now, if I ask for an extension and it is granted, maybe in one or two years I will pass away from here and the thing would be done with. My children are all educated and they are able to carry on the duties of a citizen as they ought to and I would ask that an extension be given me because I don't believe in the department forcing me to take the deed. If I should take the deed, I would like to have the request to come from me, because the laws allow me to whenever I want to. I hope that the commission will not only consider what property a man has acquired, but will consider the man, also as to his physical strength, whether

he is strong enough to carry on the affairs of a citizen. I hope the commission will do the best for our good.

SIDDIAM KRELEY: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

I am very thankful to have the commission here today because ever since I was a boy I have always understood that whenever a great man come down from Washington that was for our good. They come down to see what we are doing and to help us. That is the reason that I am so glad that they are here today.

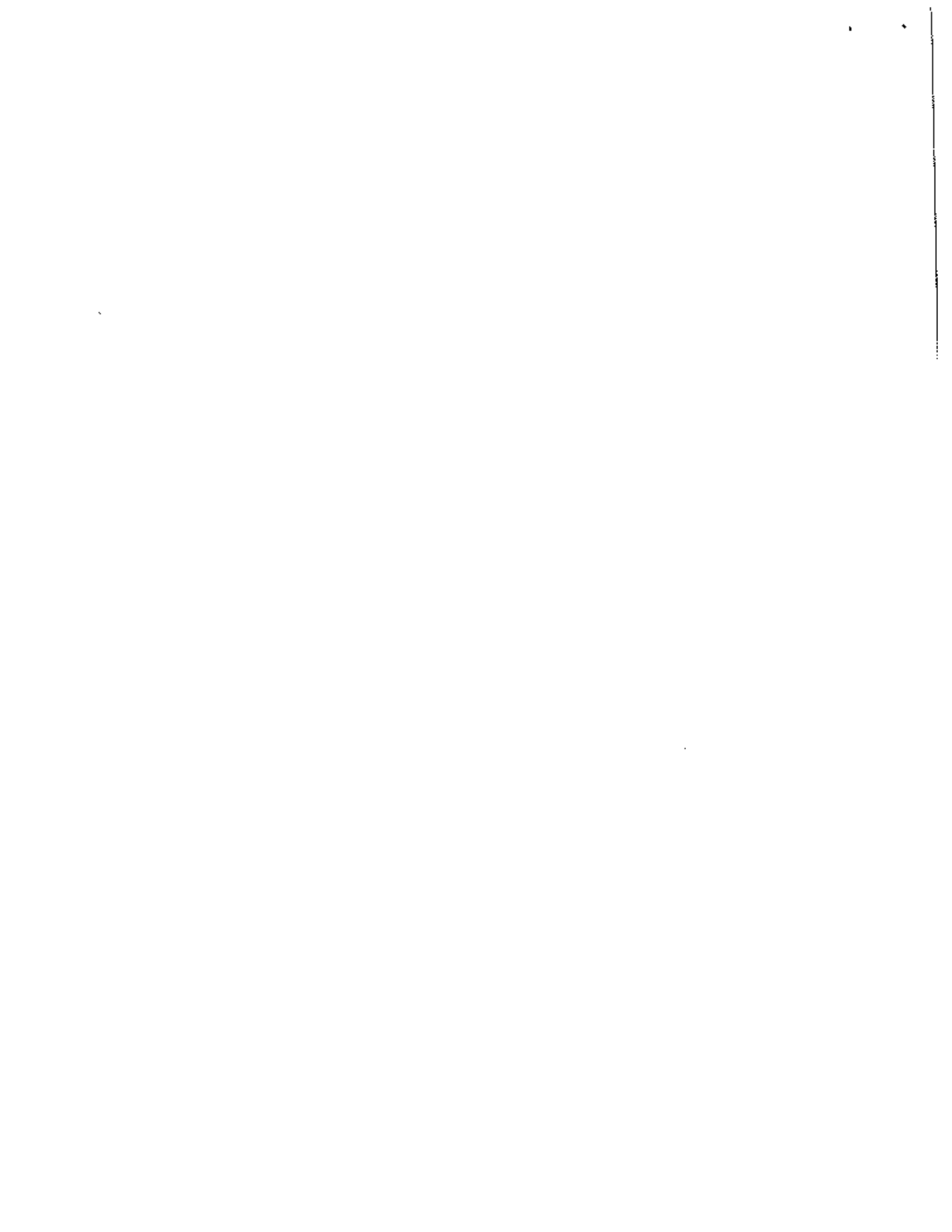
I would like to ask when I get that deed, is that for my own good or not. I don't think so and if the department is going to force me to take my deed, it is because the government is getting ^{tired} of the Indian as he is. As I see, today there are a few of us who are still holding our trust patents. Now, most of us are old men and it is a matter of only three, four or five years before we will all be passed away and the problem



will be settled very quickly and as I understand it the government has promised that it is going to educate the children of the Indians always. Now, if I take this step, it means that I cut out all my relations with the government and I will be neglected. As I see it today as soon as I am given this privilege to get a deed to my property and as times are now, it is hard to get things, the high cost of living, it is very easy for me and it is natural for any Indian to go to work and mortgage his property to get a little handful of money and I can see from that point that my place will be in the poor house at the expense of the town and it also means that if this thing is forced upon us that we are going to scatter. No one knows where we are going, probably to some high mountain or hill in the west, where we can build our camp fires.

ISAIAH HILL: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

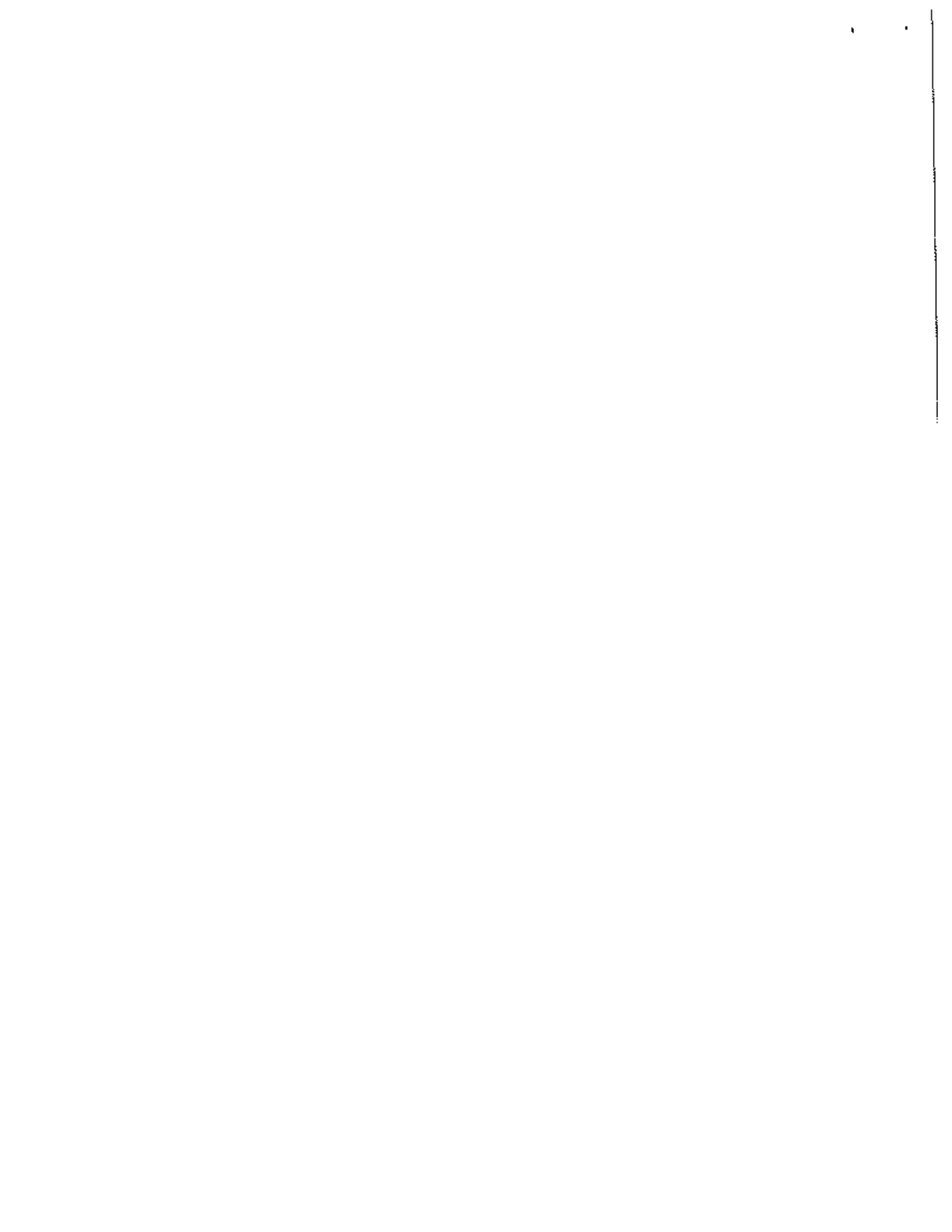
I would like to ask the commission does an Indian become a full fledged citizen as soon as he gets his deed to his property? I ask



this question because many of them have gotten their deeds to their property, and I would also like to ask why is it that the agent always holds a deed from the party that owns it after it does come. Is it because they are not competent to hold their own deed? I was told by a white man once that we will get another paper which entitles you to be a full fledged citizen.

SOLOMON SKENANDORE: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

I want to thank the commission for giving us this opportunity to express ourselves. As far back as I could remember, I have always thought we are going to remain as Indians but in recent years, I can see that changes are constantly taking place and the time has come now when we must take the other step and if we don't take that step it will be because the President of the United States has taken pity on us. According to tradition in the war of 1812 when the United States was almost defeated by Great Britain, when they had almost given up conquering Great Britain, agents were sent to the Onondas



and asked for their assistance and the Oneidas as
one man stood up and took what weapons they had
and went to the front to assist the United States.
And it was the Oneidas that went to the front to
fight against the British, they rescued the United
States, they helped the United States to win the
war and when the war was over the Oneidas went to
their wigwags as peaceful as ever and the President
called them back to the White House, that is, he
called their chiefs back and told them how glad he
was that they came to his rescue. He told them how
much he appreciated it and as he told them, he
says "We will give you \$1,000 a year every year
just as long as there is an Oneida living, we will
give you that and you shall remain as you are, if
you wish, just as long as you are an Oneida and as
long as the sun shines and the only time that your
ways shall be changed by us shall be when the sun
goes down in the west and does not rise again or
else when the trees shall grow upside down." But
the changes have come. They are taking place con-
stantly. We cannot help that and we will face it
if it does come, but I still have the hopes that
after our expressions are brought before the Presi-



dent of the United States we shall remain as we are because that is our wish. It is for our own good and in a very short time we shall all have passed away and I myself; I am now seventy-five years old and I don't think I shall live very many more years.

ISAAC ARCHIQUETTE:

I haven't much to say anymore, but the first thing, I thank those gentlemen that came and see us. There is reason why they came otherwise they wouldn't be here and I understood in this business it was only trust patents. That is only part, I understood. The reason why I wish to have trust patent yet, we are brought up under the government; that is a safe place; you can't find no better safe place only under the government. We got so used to it to be like that. Now, lately, we have a difference on this reservation. A party here now is under the state, not under the government anymore. We see all about it. We like children; just exactly what we are. I am glad I have a chance to speak a few words before you today, this afternoon. I haven't much to say



but then your children, you don't want to be responsible. That is just exactly what we are; we are children. We are children under the government; the government is responsible to us. I never believe the government force us to get our free lands unless we want it. That is way I believe. Of course, I didn't know very much; I couldn't read no history; I couldn't talk English at all, just simply nothing. We need the government and this I hope to the bottom of my heart that the government don't leave us yet, just because we can't handle it. It's no use explaining it. It's plain enough. We can't do like white sensible people; we can't; it's no use.

JOHN E. POWLESS: (Interpreted by Mr. Webster)

I don't think that I ought to become a full fledged citizen for the reason that I am not as smart as I ought to be. I am ignorant. There is a great many things I cannot do which an ordinary man ought to be able to do. I even have to get an interpreter to speak for me and to hear for me and there is a lot of things that I cannot



do. I am not opposed to the law of the white man. I like it and I would just as soon step into it myself if I was able to but I am not able to. That is why I don't think a full fledged citizenship ought to be imposed on me at this time. That is all.

Mr. Webster:

Those who are in favor of presenting the petition to the commission will please put up their right hand.

The vote was unanimous in favor of presenting the petition, 20 voting in favor of it and 7 not voting, the 7 not voting being those who have received their fee simples.

HENRY DOXTATER says he wishes to have a square deal, which, in his opinion, is a re-survey of the boundary line of the reservation.

INSPECTOR McLAUGHLIN:

My friends, I always aim to meet the

wishes of Indians, so far as I can, and am pleased that we have met the wishes of Mr. Dextater in his request of last Friday in asking us to meet you people here today. I myself, and I think I may speak for the other two members of this committee, when I say that we are very much pleased with the mild manner in which you have presented your wishes for extension of your trust period. I would have liked to have seen more of the Oneidas here today, and observe that a large majority of them present are restricted Indians, but am pleased to have heard your speakers express themselves in such a gentlemanly manner as they did.

One of your speakers expressed himself as fearful, should you receive patents in fee, that it would deprive you of the privilege of sending your children to Government Indian Schools. Such is not the case. You are not deprived of that privilege so long as appropriations are made by Congress for maintenance of schools for the education of Indians on or off their reservations, that is for children possessing the required degree of not less than one-fourth Indian blood. You needn't fear anything in that respect so long as

appropriations are made by Congress with the provisions worded the same as they have been in the past. Congress might change the provisions in an appropriation, which would change this privilege of all Indian children attending government schools, but at present, and likely to continue for some time in the future, you have the privilege of sending your children to school on your reservation or to a non-reservation Indian school, and the same privilege is given the children of the patent in fee Indian as those of the trust patent Indian.

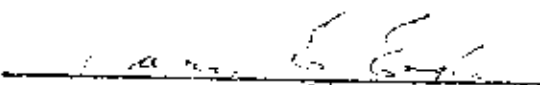
Another young man asked if a patent in fee carried with it full citizenship. My reply to that is that it does. It conveys to him all the rights and privileges of the white citizen and as a full fledged citizen you come under the laws of the State in which you reside.

Every word that your several speakers have spoken here today has been taken down by the stenographer and will be transcribed by her word for word in typewriting and will accompany our report on our work here which we submit to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. While we are not

prepared to say to you what our report may be, I can assure you that we will use our best judgment and act for the best interests of each individual, that is what we may regard as best for each and all of you in the end. We are glad to have met you again today, glad that we gave you this opportunity to meet us and glad to have heard you express your opinions, to express to us your wishes exactly as you feel regarding this matter. Remember that we are not the final judge in this matter. We report our findings and make our recommendations and our superiors determine what is deemed best for you people. We are engaged in important work in your interests and we have taken this half day off in order to meet you here today, and we will be glad to shake hands with each and all of you and say good-bye.

Conference adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

I hereby certify that the foregoing 24 pages of typewriting are a transcript of shorthand notes taken by me on August 14th, 1917, at Oneida Agency, Wisconsin.


Stenographer.

JAMES McLAUGHLIN MSS

Box 1

WSHS

WIS
MSS
PG

MAD 3/26

11G

Location

