

Structures and Factions in Tyendinaga Politics

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article de C.H. Torok analyse les différences idéologiques des factions politiques progressives et conservatrices à la Réserve indienne de Tyendinaya. Il analyse le rôle joué par le Conseil de Bande et laisse entendre que cette organisation fonctionne d'une manière de plus en plus semblable aux conseils municipaux Euro-canadiens.

This is a revised version of a chapter of my doctoral dissertation *The Acculturation of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte* completed under the supervision of the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto. Additional research was done during the summer and fall of 1967 with financial assistance from Trent University.

The purpose of this paper is to report some salient features of the political life of Tyendinaga Indian Reserve, Hastings County, Ontario. This Reserve, with a Band membership of 2,100 or a resident population of approximately 1,000, is possibly the most acculturated Canadian Iroquois group. Not only are the resident members of the Band fully integrated economically with the surrounding Euro-Canadian settlements and areas, but culturally, too, they are almost indistinguishable from their Euro-Canadian neighbours. For example, Mohawk is no longer a primary, or even an appreciably important, means of communication. No aboriginal, or modified-aboriginal, kin groups survive, nor have members of this Band ever organized a longhouse congregation (Torok 1967:31). When considering the situation at Six Nations (Shimony 1961) or Caughnawaga (Voget 1951, 1953), the almost complete acculturation of Tyendinaga becomes clearly evident.

The way these highly acculturated Mohawks cope with socio-political problems may be of interest to students of the acculturation of the North American Indian.

As described elsewhere, the ancestors of the Tyendinaga Mohawks broke away from the rest of their "tribe" during the American Revolution (Cruikshank 1930, Torok 1965). During this conflict three leaders emerged amongst them: Captains John Deserondyou, Aaron Hill and Isaac Hill. Of these three the British seem to have regarded Captain John as the spokesman, but they also recognized Captains Isaac and Aaron as chiefs.

Around 1784, then, there were the fragments of 11 lineages present in this population. A lineage matron had the right to appoint a male of her lineage to the position of "life chief". The appointment usually went to the matron's brother or one of the matron's sons. The eleven life chiefs formed the tribal council. If a life chief did not perform his duties satisfactorily, he could be replaced by the matron of his lineage. There was also some sort of ceremony in connection with the elevation of a person to the status of life chief, but the particulars of such a ceremony are not known. It is clear, however, that these life chiefs were not given those Mohawk names that are associated with the classical League organization still existing to some degree at the Six Nations Reserve.

The tribal council, then, transacted the business of the Bay of Quinte Mohawks until 1870. At that time, an elective system was introduced, and, according to an informant, the majority of the Bay of Quinte Mohawks "sold out to the Government". For the next fifty years, down to the 1920's, a "shadow government" of life chiefs co-existed with the elected Band Council. The life chiefs, however, were without executive power, the recognition of which fact led some of them to seek office on the elected council. As the years went by, and as it became increasingly evident that the Canadian authorities would refuse to deal with the life chiefs, vacant statuses of the life chief category were left unfilled. In 1964, the only person of life chief status, so claimed an informant, was the informant himself. He stated (sadly) that:

These young people go to school to get an education. They want to forget about the old days. I tried to show some of them old books that

tell all about ancient history; they weren't interested. There came a time when only me and old ... went to the Grand Councils. People dit not want to bother no more, the family mothers all died, so now I am the only one left. Them fellers on the Council today, they are White man's Indians. They follow the Ottawa line: The Indian Act. That is not the Mohawk way. The Mohawk way is the life chiefs and the Grand Councils. But them young fellers think they know all the answers.

According to the Indian Affairs Branch (1962:24), the Mohawks of Tyendinaga were the first ones to hold elections according to the provisions of the acts relating to Indian Affairs:

Acts relating to Indian Affairs were passed in 1868 and 1869, by which provision was made for the election of band councils. Authority was given to the councils to make rules and regulations regarding such local matters as public health; observance of order at assemblies; repression of intemperance; prevention of trespass by cattle; maintenance of roads, bridges, ditches and fences; the construction and maintenance and repair of school houses, council houses and other Indian public buildings; and the establishment of pounds and the appointment of pound keepers. The first band to apply for authority to hold elections was the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. The Council of this Band has operated very successfully ever since and has undoubtedly contributed to the notable progress of the Band.

Nowadays, in contrast to the pattern existing from about 1870 to the 1950's, a candidate running for office has to stipulate whether he is running for Council-member or for chief. If a candidate for chieftainship is defeated, he does not become a member of the Council. The Band Council, then, is composed of four councillors and the chief who acts as the chairman. In addition to the elected chief and the councillors the Band also hires and appoints a Secretary-Treasurer who is a salaried employee of the Council.

Elections are held every two years in December. There is no rotating membership; in other words, all the positions on the Council are contested at the same time. All reserve members who are registered as *resident band members*, and are 21 or over, are entitled to vote at these elections.

There are two political factions on the reserve: the progressives and the conservatives. Some of the progressives refer to themselves as "shorthairs" and to the conservatives as "longhairs". The conservatives do not like to be labelled as "longhairs", a few

occasionally refer to themselves as "Mohawk workers". Prior to each election, meetings are held by each faction to decide upon the nominees to support during the coming election. Thus, in fact, a two-faction system operates on the reserve, but the Band Council would normally have both conservatives and progressives among its members. The results of the last ten elections indicate that the two factions are of roughly the same political strength since conservative and progressive chiefs seem to alternate in holding office.

It has been rather difficult to determine in just what sense these political factions differ from one another. It must be borne in mind that in the Tyendinaga case one cannot conveniently identify the conservatives in terms of their allegiance to a hereditary council as is the case on the Six Nations Reserve (Noon 1949, Shimony 1961). Nor can one state categorically that the progressives co-operate with the Dominion Government while the conservatives do not. At Tyendinaga the differences are much more subtle and elusive.

If one were to ask a shorthair to characterize in his own words the political philosophy of the longhairs, one would hear the following sorts of statements: "They want the government to do everything for them"; "They do not know how to conduct the band's business"; "They always talk about the old treaties". On the other hand, the statements that one would most frequently hear from a longhair concerning his assessment of shorthairs and their policies would be something like this: "They have too many new-fangled ideas", "They are selling out", "They are looking after their own interests".

Perhaps one could make a basic distinction between these two political categories in terms of their orientation to time. The longhairs seem to be past-oriented, the shorthairs more present and future-oriented. Lest these catch phrases be misunderstood, some elaboration of the time-orientation approach as used here is in order.

Longhair politicians speak a great deal about past treaties, grants, rights and the violation of these by the white authorities. One of the ex-chiefs, a longhair, wanted to obtain copies of "the Haldimand Treaty", "the Jay Treaty" and also an "original" map

of the reserve of Tyendinaga as surveyed at the time of the making of the grant by Lieut. Gov. Simcoe. The purpose of obtaining these documents, preferably in the original, would have been to prove that the Mohawks of Tyendinaga were unjustly deprived of certain rights and privileges that had been granted to them by still valid "treaties" or agreements made between themselves and the British Crown. Also, a great deal of attention was paid by this individual to past sales and leases of land. In some cases he claimed that the sale or lease in question was irregular in one or more respects and therefore invalid. Even if at the present time the importance of a particular "right" is minimal, longhairs would still tend to demand a restoration of it. For example, according to some longhairs the Tyendinaga Mohawks should be allowed to fish commercially and without buying a licence in the waters of the Bay of Quinte since the official grant gave them "the waters of the Bay". This insistence upon fishing rights is maintained although commercial fishing is of minimum importance on the reserve.

The shorthairs, on the other hand, seem to be much more willing to treat current problems without regard to the letter of past treaties. For example, according to an agreement, Mohawks of Tyendinaga were allowed to spear pickerel each spring in some of the waters of the area. In 1951 the then incumbent shorthair chief and his council passed a bylaw limiting the daily catch of fish to three fish per family. In his words:

/Fishing/ did create a problem when some of our band members got the idea to become millionaires by selling pickerel. The Council could see trouble coming and believed that our treaty only gave us the right to take fish for our own use. We made our first By-Law which restricted our members to take fish at certain hours, and 3 fish to the family per day. As Chief of that day, I tell you I wasn't very popular, so when election time came, things were really booming as far as interest was concerned, and we had an opposing faction that really took over. (Hill n.d.: 4).

Naturally, there are no hard and fast lines between the two factions; some individuals are more conservative than others within the longhair category, and some are more progressive than others within the shorthair category. There may even occur a crossing of this political frontier between the two factions, but such an occurrence is both rare and controversial. These factions

do not have a permanent organization in the sense that provincial or federal political parties do; but they do have some fairly clearly understood procedures at election time. It is known, for example, that meetings would be held by each faction prior to the election, that certain key reserve figures are shorthairs or longhairs, and that adherents of a faction should support the nominee of the group. This structured, but still relatively informal, political activity is possible because of internal exchange of opinion amongst band members, a process that goes on all the time. Through the operation of informal discussion in various groups a consensus of opinion is reached by each political faction concerning the state of reserve politics, so that these factions are visible as definite groups only prior to the election itself.

There does not seem to be any appreciable difference between the two factions as far as their evaluation of the Dominion Government is concerned. As both sides see it, "treaties" and agreements had been made between the British Crown (and later with the Dominion Government) and the Tyendinaga Band. Both political factions seem to view with alarm the possibility of the transference of responsibilities and jurisdiction over Indians of the Federal Government to the provincial governments. Reserve politicians point out that since the treaties and agreements had been made with the Crown and the Federal Government and not with provincial governments, it is possible that provincial governments would not regard these treaties as binding. Thus, it would seem that most reserve residents, whether they reckon themselves short or longhairs, would prefer to maintain the administrative relationship presently existing between Indian reserves and the Federal Government.

In order to facilitate the understanding of the operation of the Tyendinaga Band Council, *Council Minutes*, representing one half of the total number of meetings held in 1964, have been examined. It is clear from these documents that in addition to the four elected Council members and their chairman, the chief, other individuals also attend the meetings of the Council. The secretary-treasurer is a salaried employee of the Band. She records the meetings, manages the monies, but takes no part, at least formally, in legislative decisions. The local superintendent, or an ap-

pointee of his, is also regularly present at the Council meetings. In fact, it is suggested here that the very functioning of the Band Council depends upon the performance of a great deal of routine work by the Superintendent's office.

Much of the business transacted at these meetings is of a routine nature: the reception of financial and Band membership records, for example, seems to be almost automatic. These records are compiled and presented to the Council by the Superintendent's Office. Authorizing the chief and the secretary-treasurer to sign cheques on behalf of the Band is another example of routine business.

At times decisions have to be made concerning the operation and organization of band-sponsored business enterprises and the maintenance of band-owned properties. The Council, in cases like these, may appoint a salaried caretaker to look after the Council House buildings, authorize the incumbent chief to act as welfare officer, and appoint and authorize part-time gamekeepers to enforce the local by-law concerning the use of the duck preserve. In addition to such appointments, the Council also appoints, authorizes and pays a police constable who maintains law and order on the reserve and who, being an R.C.M.P. special constable, has the authority to effect arrests according to the legal usages of the federal government and also according to the by-laws of the band.

The Council is also involved in negotiations between band members and white individuals, corporations, or business firms. For example, if a band member desires to apply for the installation of electricity, his application first has to be approved by the Council which, upon accepting and approving such application from a band member, becomes liable to the Hydro Authority. In other words, if a band member fails to pay his Hydro bills, the Authority can collect from the Band Council.

Various forms of welfare help are administered by the Council. As Hill (n.d.: 9) put it:

In the Province of Ontario any Band operating under Section 68/ of the Indian Act/ has the privilege of entering into an agreement with the Department of Public Welfare whereby we administer all welfare expenditures on our Reserve and obtain a refund of 30% of the cost from

the Ontario Department of Public Welfare. This is a beneficial arrangement as under it we receive 80% subsidy on relief expenditures and we are therefore able to issue relief to needy Indians on much the same basis as non-Indian municipalities. Limited Band funds would not permit us to do this previously and our needy had to exist on rather meager allowances. A member of the Council is required to act as Welfare Administrator to comply with the provisions of this Act.

Elderly persons in need may receive cash from the Band Council, and unemployed men may be hired in winter-time to work on Band-owned buildings, roads, and other property. A needy person may also receive help in the form of a land lot upon which, again with Council help, he might build a house.

The Band Council, along with the Superintendent's Office, has also organized a Physicians' Services Incorporated Committee. According to this arrangement, costs of membership are shared by the individual, the Band Council and the Indian Affairs Branch. The initial stages of this program met considerable resistance on the part of some longhairs who felt that medical care "should be paid for" by the government, but it seems likely that the present P.S.I. program will be continued by the Band Council.

There has already been a considerable increase in Band Council activities and jurisdiction. The managing of welfare on the reserve, the establishing of the P.S.I. Committee, and the setting up of a duck-hunting preserve are some of the examples that might be mentioned in this context. Furthermore, Tyendinaga has operated under Section 68 of the Indian Act since 1958. This Act gives the opportunity to band councils to manage their own revenues. This means that

.../ the/ Band Council prepares an annual budget and then spends Band funds accordingly. Council therefore has complete figures on all expenditures on Band funds and are in a position to inform all Band members as to what is being done with their monies... In the comparatively short period of two years during which our Band has operated under Section 68 of the Act, our annual Band income has increased from \$8,000.00 to \$9,250.00. This has been due to members being more interested in financial affairs of the Band and trying to prevent unwise and unnecessary expenditures... All Band assets were examined in detail and wherever possible revenue was built up. For instance, rentals from Band lands which had remained at an unrealistic figure for many years were adjusted to a more up-to-date amount. Our leases were reviewed and the annual rental doubled in some cases (Hill n.d.: 8-9).

DISCUSSION

It is evident that there existed internal structural as well as external political-military tensions and pressures in the socio-cultural universe of the post-contact Iroquois. Fenton (1955:335) identifies one such area of structural stress when he speaks of two kinds of chiefly statuses:

One area of tension which was never resolved satisfactorily, however, lay between the duties of the Sachems or peace chiefs, whose statuses were ascribed by membership in certain clans, and the war chiefs whose statuses were achieved.

In addition to this area of tension, one must also mention a type of stress that was associated with the co-existence in time of descent-based (lineage and clan) and territorially-based (village) socio-political structures. Fenton has shown that there was a state of uneasy balance between these (Fenton 1951: 52). In the descriptive part of this paper, as well as elsewhere (Torok 1965: 77), I stated that the growing power of Tyendinaga war chiefs and the spatial separation of these Mohawks from the rest of their "tribe" during the American Revolution illustrates the presence in their social structure of these same conflicting forces. Eventually, war chiefs and the village won out against the hereditary chiefs and the clans in the sphere of inter-village social integration. Once the Tyendinaga Mohawks established themselves on the Bay of Quinte their effective participation in the Mohawk "tribe" on the Grand River and in the resurrected Iroquois League of the same locality came to an end.

Concurrent with structural stress the impact of European power politics contributed greatly towards the fragmentation of the Iroquois League (e.g. American vs. Canadian reconstructions of the League), as well as towards the breaking up of the constituent tribes (e.g. the Mohawks of the Grand River vs. the Mohawks of Tyendinaga).

Fenton (1955:338) summarizes admirably the impact of European politics on the Iroquois:

Consistent with their own moiety system and preference for the dual division in politics, two factions have prevailed. A French vs. English faction of the 18th century gave way to a British vs. American division

during the American Revolution, of which the recent Federal vs. State polarity is the heir. A similar polarity prevails in religion with Pagan vs. Christian schisms coming down to modern times.

Thus, down to the time of their settlement on the Bay of Quinte in 1784, factionalism among the Tyendinaga Mohawks shows the same general characteristics as Iroquois factionalism. Since 1784 factionalism has developed in a different direction from that prevailing among some of the American Iroquois, as well as from that of the Six Nations at Brantford.

At Six Nations as well as on other Iroquois reserves a polarization of factions occurred when a Christian faction adopted the elective principle of representation while a conservative faction sought to maintain the hereditary council (Nicholas 1965: 52). The advocates of the hereditary faction have ever since been clustered around, so to speak, the religion of Handsome Lake which provides a "cultural focus" for members of the conservative faction (Fenton 1965: 263). Shimony has shown how the Handsome Lake religion serves to integrate various aspects of conservative culture and social structure (Shimony 1961). Nicholas (1965: 55) summarizes the situation as follows:

"Any member of Reserve society, however, can easily identify the factional affiliation of any other person, whether he is politically active or not. The two diacritical phenomena, religion and voting or non-voting, can be applied to any member of the society to determine his place in the system of political alignments."

As a result of this polarization and socio-cultural integration, Six Nations factionalism is of the "pervasive" kind which makes effective political co-operation between progressives and conservatives nearly impossible. (On "pervasive factionalism" see Siegel and Beals 1960).

Tyendinaga factionalism has developed without the cultural focus of the Handsome Lake religion; thus Tyendinaga conservatism has no ideological and structural integration comparable to other Iroquois reserves where the Handsome Lake religion is present.

I would suggest that the "factions" present at Tyendinaga might be viewed as very similar to more-or-less ad-hoc factions in Euro-Canadian municipal politics.

In summary, the Band Council of Tyendinaga, a body elected by all resident Band members 21 years of age and older, manages the affairs of the Band in a manner increasingly similar to that of municipal councils. At present the office of the Superintendent still performs most of the administrative paperwork, but if the present trend continues the Band Council will gradually take over this sphere of activity. In contrast to some other Iroquois reserves, there has been no recent attempt at Tyendinaga to govern the band through a hereditary council. Shorthairs and longhairs alike seem to accept the elective principle of representation. While the shorthair faction tends to stress goal achievement through the use of white-inspired organizations and processes, the longhairs tend to focus some of their attention on past treaties and agreements and manifest considerable caution in introducing innovations that might lead to the Federal Government's gradual withdrawal from the management of Indian affairs.

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