

“Building Forts in Their Hearts”

Background: Edmond Atkin was a member of the colonial South Carolina Governor’s Council. In 1755 he wrote a report on British and French interactions with Indian and recommended a plan for British interactions with Indians. Excerpts from Atkin’s report follow.

Report by Edmond Atkin

...yet it is truly a great absurdity to imagine, that either the French or ourselves can maintain an Interest and Influence... among the Inland [Indian] Nations, barely by the Possession of Forts, without being at the same time possess’d of their Affections.

...[T]he ... largest [forts] may easily be starv’d by ... [the Indians] into a Surrender whenever they please. We must look therefore into the Conduct and management of the French in those Forts, in order to discover by the Arts practiced therein [to secure the Indians’ friendship]....

Those Arts will be found to be the most Simple, the most easy and certain, and the least expensive imaginable. The two Principal ones are, the Provision of Gunsmiths, and ... [the] judicious Application of ...[gifts].

“...the French Forts ...[give gifts to] the old [Indian] Head Men of Note, who ... repay the French ...for those Trifles, ...[by speaking well of them]...”

“...[We need] to practice ...the same ...ingratiating Arts as the French do; and above all, to begin ... building Forts in their [the Indians’] hearts....

“...the great share the French Missionaries have in influencing the Indians ... is such, that they have been esteemed almost ... as much ... as the [forts]. They have been the means of gaining as much respect from the Indians to the French, as our Traders have caused disrespect to us by their dissolute Lives and Manners.”

Source: Jacobs, Wilbur R., ed. *The Appalachian Indian Frontier: The Edmond Atkin Report and Plan of 1755*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.

Guiding Questions

1. In Atkin’s opinion how did the French influence the Indians?
2. According to Atkin’s report, how important were military forts compared to “forts in the heart” built by gifts and missionary contact?
3. In Atkin’s view, why are British traders less successful in winning Indians’ respect and support?

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Absurdity: meaningless

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Provision: condition, providing

Those Arts will be found to be the most Simple, the most easy and certain, and the least expensive imaginable. The two Principal ones are, the **Provision** of **Gunsmiths**, and ... [the] **judicious** Application of ...[gifts].

Gunsmiths one who makes or repairs guns

Judicious: well-thought out

“...the French Forts ...[give gifts to] the old [Indian] Head Men of Note, who ... repay the French ...for those **Trifles**, ...[by speaking well of them]...”

Trifles: something worth very little

“...[We need] to practice ...the same ...**ingratiating** Arts as the French do; and above all, to begin ... building Forts in their [the Indians’] hearts....

Ingratiating to flatter or gain someone’s favor

“...the great share the French **Missionaries** have in influencing the Indians ... is such, that they have been **esteemed** almost ... as much ... as the [forts]. They have been the means of gaining as much respect from the Indians to the French, as our Traders have caused disrespect to us by their **dissolute** Lives and Manners.”

Missionaries: people who spread a religion

Esteemed: respected or admired

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Dissolute: degenerate or self-indulgent

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<p>Absurdity: meaningless</p> <p>Possession: control</p> <p>Affections: liking, fondness</p> <p>Provision: condition, providing</p> <p>Gunsmiths one who makes or repairs guns</p> <p>Judicious: well-thought out</p> <p>Trifles: something worth very little</p> <p>Ingratiating to flatter or gain someone’s favor</p> <p>Missionaries: people who spread a religion</p> <p>Esteemed: respected or admired</p> <p>Dissolute: degenerate or self-indulgent</p>	<p>...yet it is truly a great absurdity to imagine, that either the French or ourselves can maintain an Interest and Influence... among the Inland [Indian] Nations, barely by the Possession of Forts, without being at the same time possess’d of their Affections.</p> <p>...[T]he ... largest [forts] may easily be starv’d by ... [the Indians] into a Surrender whenever they please. We must look therefore into the Conduct and management of the French in those Forts, in order to discover by the Arts practiced therein [to secure the Indians’ friendship]....</p> <p>Those Arts will be found to be the most Simple, the most easy and certain, and the least expensive imaginable. The two Principal ones are, the Provision of Gunsmiths, and ... [the] judicious Application of ...[gifts].</p> <p>“...the French Forts ...[give gifts to] the old [Indian] Head Men of Note, who ... repay the French ...for those Trifles, ...[by speaking well of them]...”</p> <p>“...[We need] to practice ...the same ...ingratiating Arts as the French do; and above all, to begin ... building Forts in their [the Indians’] hearts....</p> <p>“...the great share the French Missionaries have in influencing the Indians ... is such, that they have been esteemed almost ... as much ... as the [forts]. They have been the means of gaining as much respect from the Indians to the French, as our Traders have caused disrespect to us by their dissolute Lives and Manners.”</p> <p>Source: Jacobs, Wilbur R., ed. <i>The Appalachian Indian Frontier: The Edmond Atkin Report and Plan of 1755</i>. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.</p>	<p>1. What do the French need to keep their forts on Indian lands?</p> <p>2. Why will large forts be defeated by Indians?</p> <p>3. What 2 ways do the French keep friendship with Indians?</p> <p>4. Why do the French win the respect of Indians but British traders do not?</p>