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Essay #2

“The merchants and the traders have come; their profits are pre-ordained…” (Sri Guru Granth Sahib).

The murder of a hunter from a local tribe in the Pennsylvania area will cause grief to those afflicted and aggravation to those that feel they must deal with the situation. As the story continues, the British characters continuously display contempt for their neighbors in their lifestyle, ideas of justice, and demands for the calamity that has occurred. Without the feelings of unity towards the Iroquois people that are attempted in return, the British want the issue of Sawantaeny’s murder to be resolved: with great haste, with as little interruption to the usual trade as possible, and while still holding close to their beliefs over that of the Indians.

The quick resolving of this incident was paramount to the everyday British colonist of the area, which would be handled through their understanding of justice and legal system. Allowing for this issue to continue would only increase tension, which would likely lead to more conflict or permit the current conflict to interrupt their lives that might have to do with the Indians. As stated, “An arrest is already in the offing, because nothing matters more than making sure this isolated violent incident does not ignite a larger conflict between Indians and colonists” makes the thought process of the colonists quite clear (NIGHT Ch5 par20). This is shared by the Indians, but is treated as a more ceremonial reasoning than it is a inconvenience.

Trade is essential to the economy of the area, which concerns folk from all echelons of society but merchants most of all, especially because it might bring the idea of trading furs for spirits into light once again. If the incident were to escalate, then the very lucrative fur trading commerce would either slow considerably, or slow to the point that it would cause major ramifications to the towns that rely on it, mostly voiced by John Cartridge. While this is a shared idea between the British colonists and the Iroquois nation, their reasonings for wanting this differ in their end goals with the colonists wanting further self-gain, and the Iroquois wanting further to gain for their community.

The society of the British colonists are used to their way of thinking reigning supreme and all others being forced into a hierarchal system beneath them. Logan’s speech suggests, “…he actually stands firm in his belief in cultural hierarchy, one in which European leaders, such as Penn (and those leaders’ designated representatives, such as himself) play the fathers while Indians and ordinary colonists play the sons” showing his apparent politeness but ingrained idea of how the two parties should interact (NIGHT Ch7 par39). This is further cemented by the lackadaisical reaction by Governor Keith towards making any semblance of acknowledgement of the issue to the Five Nations of Indians.

In conclusion, the British colonist idea of legal justice and the Indian idea of constructive justice were very opposed and misunderstood. The British colonists thought of the matter as something to be dealt with through the governmental body and that it lacked any involvement on a deeper level. The two peoples shared more than they understood, just from different perspectives and with differing goals in mind as to why they pursued them.

NIGHT. Nicole Eustace, *Covered with Night: A story of murder and indigenous justice in early America.* New York, NY : Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., [2021]