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*Edited by Frank H. Nickerson*

**HON. JOSEPH NICOLA.**

**SOMETHING ABOUT THE PENOBSCOT'S REPRESENTATIVE AND HIS WORK.**

**And About the Rod He has in Pickle for an Aroostook Member—Do We Owe the Indians \$400,000?—He Makes Maine an Off.—And Wants the Seat of Government Removed to Oldtown.**

From time to time there has appeared in portions of the press of Maine, references to Joseph Nicola, an Indian and a member of the present House of Representatives, who represents the Penobscot tribe, the last one referring to his strong and manly face. But previous to this, some of these papers have made him say that he should remain at Augusta a couple of weeks or so, and then go home, drawing however, his salary for the whole term. Of course Mr. Nicola read these, and on Monday last he called on us and told us there was no truth in these stories, and that he had numerous duties to perform, to which he should give the same attention as did his white brethren to theirs.

In the first place we desire to state to the funny paragraphers, that Mr. Nicola is a thorough gentleman, and, although he is an Indian, yet he has such an education as would enable him to spell down quite a batch of the present House, should that body go into a spelling school session. As figures, as will be seen before we conclude this article, he is no novice, and he writes a better hand than does some of the reporters who poke fun at him. When to this is added the fact that he is a temperance man, quiet and correct in his speech and a good judge of men, it will be seen at once that the Penobscots have no reason to be ashamed of their legislator.

Mr. Nicola came in, on Monday, being on his way to Augusta, after having spent the Sabbath at home. Of course we did not lose such an opportunity to gain an Indian's idea of our Legislature and the men there, and in a long and interesting talk, he said in substance the following:

The big building at Augusta is a busy place. In it there is a slow and careful machine having three branches; the Senate, the House and the Governor's Council. The House watches the Senate; the Senate watches the House; the Governor and Council watch both branches and the newspaper men watch the whole lot. But after all, sometimes bad bills slip through unnoticed, and the next morning the newspaper chaps tell them about it, and then they are re-considered and sometimes thrown out. Even after this, many laws come back to be amended.

Perhaps some ambitious man will come in with a big scheme, others object and then there is a big pow-wow, which costs the tax payers a great deal. Take the Bangor Boom fight! It made me laugh. Some of the lawyers who came over there and talked, never stood on a floating log in their lives, yet they strutted up and down and claimed that "WE have privileges" and all that. One man said that one time he let three hundred logs into a boom and took out seven, and as near as I could make it out, he claimed the boom people took the two hundred and ninety-three logs, in payment for the care of the seven.

There was another fight over the division of Boothbay. Some of the people said they had no representation in town affairs and wanted to be set apart. Why in my tribe we all get equal representation and we would think it a horrid thing to divide the people.

"No, I have never seen any wampum used, and I don't think men are bought." They are not solemn in opening the council talk. We smoke the calumet and are very solemn before the big talk begins but over there they are giddy. Everything is done in writing.

Think Robie in the House is the most sound man there and I like him best, but I tell you Joe Manly is very handy, and he can fit himself to any place pretty quick. Talbot of East Machias is a great watchman. He watches everything and he asks about everything. Great fellow to ask. They are a temperance set. Have no fault to find with any one, not even with the new member from Aroostook who is on the committee on Indian affairs, and who would not do justice to us. He forgets this land is rightfully ours, but say he has been kind, for he set me hunting up the account between the tribe and the State, and I find there is due us just \$459,924, and I am going to ask him to pay it. He says he wants to give us what we deserve and nothing more.

Here Nicola drew from his pocket book a sheet of paper, covered with figures which would be a credit to a high school boy, so far as neatness and accuracy goes. He explained them as follows:

There is due us for rent of shores for 26 years at \$4,600 per year.....\$119,600  
 The price was \$5,000 per year, but the State paid only \$400.  
 Loss of money put into the State Treasury..... 13,000

Total \$132,600  
 The cash put into treasury by the tribe was \$60,000 and years afterwards it was learned that Indian agents had drawn out \$13,000, for what purpose, the tribe never knew.

Interest on \$132,600 at 6 per cent. for 29 years.....\$230,754  
 Interest on \$4,600 for 26 years, 7,176  
 To which add..... 132,600  
 Add other debts..... 84,424

Total debt of State, \$459,924  
 Mr. Nicola did not expect to bring this amount back with him, and from the twinkle of his eye and the smile upon his lips as he talked, one could easily surmise that he did not expect to find the gentleman from Aroostook with the cash at hand, but he soberly declared that these figures do but express the truth, and that the sum is only the Penobscots due.

Joseph Nicola, as we have said is a strong and practical temperance man, and were he not troubled with a husky voice would address the house on the subject of intemperance in his tribe, and he would make a good speech too. Liquor, he says, is demoralizing the tribe, and he is going before the temperance committee and ask them to draw a bill making it a prison offence to either sell, give, or procure for an Indian, intoxicating liquors. This he thinks would deter Oldtown and Bangor dealers from trading with the red men and squaws and then his tribe would be better physically and morally.

Mr. Nicola, while here, arranged with the county attorney, to have the case of Newell Gabriel, an Indian who stabbed a member of the tribe, postponed until Thursday, when he would be in attendance. Nicola is bondsman for Gabriel.

Thursday, Mr. Nicola came in again, just as jolly as ever. He stated he had some thoughts on woman's suffrage which he should like to give us, and said that he passed Wednesday afternoon and evening in the meetings of the Committee on Legal Affairs, who had this female question under discussion. The thoughts which ran through his mind were something like this:

There is an old tradition in our tribe, that woman sprang from a beautiful plant, but the white man teaches she came from a man and from a rib taken while he slept. The white man speaks of the Ship of State, and of his country as a ship, and he says the supreme right in the land is the right of suffrage. Now when a question which concerns the whole country comes up, then should the supremacy be exercised. Now let us see! When a ship is built, the keel is laid, and this is the same as the backbone in a human being. Then the ribs are added to suit. Now suppose the ship goes on the rocks. Ribs may break and give way, but still she may be saved. But if the keel breaks the back bone is gone and the craft doomed. Therefore, in my opinion the supremacy is vested in the keel, or back bone, and not in ribs, nor in any thing ever made out of a rib.

Referring again to the Indian claim, Mr. Nicola says he has made the State the following liberal offer. If Maine will pay over the four hundred and odd thousand, Mr. Nicola agrees to throw Portland and Bangor in the shade, by giving back one half, if Maine will move the seat of government to Oldtown where it belongs.

Nicola has been before the temperance committee, and asked them to report the following special law:

Any one selling liquor to a Penobscot Indian, to be imprisoned on conviction, thirty days without bail, for first offence. Whoever carries to an Indian's house, or who gives to an Indian, liquor, a punishment double the above. "Just watch that committee and see what they will do," said Mr. Nicola.

*Dec 25 - 1888 heard Mr. Nicola make a speech at the Xmas celebration. It was one of the best, most dignified, well rounded, appropriate speeches that I ever heard. His English was perfect & his appearance fine & commanding. Personally he is tall & slender with a grave face, rather long, & deeply wrinkled, a thin mustache & more the air of a half breed than a full blood. He is an old party man. Later he wrote the Red Man*