

WHY EDUCATE THE INDIANS?

Address by the Secretary of War, Honorable Patrick J. Hurley, at the Commencement Exercises of Bacone College, Bacone, Oklahoma, Oklahoma, June 2, 1931.

I am delighted to be present at your Commencement Exercises. It is 26 years ago to-day that I received my diploma from this school. By that certificate, this institution branded me as one who had met its educational requirements. I am grateful to Dr. J. S. Morrow and Dr. J. H. Scott, who are both now deceased, for the opportunity they gave me to receive an education.

At that time, I wondered vaguely why these two noble characters and many others were so deeply interested in securing for me an education. My conclusions at that time recurred to me some months ago when your distinguished President, Dr. B. D. Weeks, startled me with this question: "Why should we educate the Indians?" At first I felt that I should answer by asking another question: "Why should we educate anyone?" But I realized that Dr. Weeks was serious and that he is devoting his life to the education and the welfare of the Indian people. Contemplating these things I realized that his question raised every element of the Indian problem and the relationship of the Indians to the Government and to their fellow citizens. I then attempted to answer his question to the best of my ability.

I know the Indian. I know his characteristics. I was reared among the Indians. I went to school with them. I served the Choctaws for years as National Attorney. The then Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation gave me my first opportunity for public life. I have served in the Army with many of them. I am under a debt of gratitude to the Indians. I am willing to analyze the Indian's character as a friend who is deeply interested in their welfare.

Spiritually the Indians are capable of becoming and usually do become most devout Christians. The Indian is a natural soldier. In every conflict since the Revolutionary War he has contributed his portion to the success of Ameri-

can arms. In the World War, many Indians received the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in battle. The first French Croix-de-Guerre with Silver Star citation awarded to a citizen of Oklahoma was given to Joseph Oklahombi, a full blood Choctaw. As warriors, we give the Indians their places among our outstanding soldiers. We in Oklahoma are proud of that superb scout and leader, Apushmataha, who led his forces under the command of Andrew Jackson. We are proud of Stand Watie, whose Indian troops followed the battle stained banner of the Confederacy. There are still among us Red Men who rode stirrup to stirrup with Theodore Roosevelt in the Spanish American War. From a standpoint of patriotism and valor, the Indians have no superiors.

Our pride in individual Indians whose names stand out in the history of our State is not limited to warriors. In the tranquillity of peace, the Cherokees gave birth to an American Cadmus. Sequoyah invented an alphabet by which the Cherokee Indians were enabled to write in their own language. Intellectually, the Indian has shown powers of concentration above that of the average white man. Indians have won high places in the councils of our nation. One of them at present is Vice President of the United States. One of them is the author of the most advanced banking system in the world. Another is the greatest philosopher and humorist of our age.

The Indian by nature is agreeable, kind to those with whom he is associated. He is possessed by a depth of understanding and a disinclination to force his attentions upon anyone who does not invite them. Calm, dignified, intelligent, and courageous, he is responsive to the rights of others. He is stoical, undemonstrative, but capable of the most enduring friendship. Indian loyalty is unchangeable. These characteristics of the Indian properly developed by education contribute to the intellectual and spiritual life of our nation.

This raises the question, If the Indian has all of these characteristics why has he not as a race progressed equally with his white brothers? Why are we still confronted by an Indian problem? Why are many of our Red Men pen-

niless, having been divested of their ownership of a continent? That raises a fundamental element in the answer to the question: Why should we educate the Indian?

When our colonial ancestors, the Cavaliers of Virginia, the Quakers of Pennsylvania, the Catholics of Maryland, the Puritans of New England, the Dutch of New Amsterdam, met our North American Indian, one of his characteristics that they seemed to have understood first was that the Indians had no acquisitive attributes. He placed no value on the land that comprised the great continent which he occupied. The colonists took advantage of the Indian's lack of knowledge of property values. William Penn, who received what is now the State of Pennsylvania as a grant from the British crown, found it occupied by Indians. This was an anomaly in the mind of the white man. To his ways of thinking, ownership and occupancy were almost synonymous. Occupancy in the white man's law was a symbol of title of ownership. Penn has received his white man's title from the British Crown. Acting upon a white man's law of land tenure, Penn recognized the Indian claim to the land comprising his grant. He conceived it to be a cloud upon his title and the only way he knew to remove it was by purchase. He purchased the State of Pennsylvania from the Indians for goods which had little value. The Dutch bought Manhattan Island from the Indians by giving in exchange for it property valued at \$24. Trades of this nature were made with Indian tribes by colonists all along the Atlantic seaboard and have continued clear across the continent to the land upon which we are now standing. Here the Five Civilized Tribes made the last formidable stand in an attempt to maintain their own methods of living while surrounded by a mighty, alien civilization. Historically, we seem to attribute no lack of ethics to William Penn or his distinguished compatriots for having bought empires for a pittance. Things have changed somewhat. Here in Oklahoma, we prosecute those who acquire the title of land from Indians by misrepresentation or for a grossly inadequate consideration. History makes considerable difference between what it considers ethics in acquiring an em-

pire and the ethics in acquiring 40 acres, but the underlying principle has always been the same. It has been the white man's acquisitive sense, his desire for the ownership of property, and the Indian's lack of knowledge of the value of property. Unfortunately, our Government, like William Penn, recognized from the very beginning the Indian ownership of the vast territory now embraced in the United States. In my opinion, it would have been far more honorable to have disregarded the Indian claim to any land and to have given to the Indian citizenship and to have given him an education. Through generations we should have taught him values. We should have instilled in him the acquisitive sense of our own race. Our Government has conscientiously attempted to protect the Indian in his ownership of land until he developed understanding of its value. When we consider the landless Indians of Oklahoma who still have no sense of values, no acquisitive attributes, we realize that the beneficent policy of our Government has not been altogether successful. It makes no difference what the Government attempts to do for the Indian by way of allotting him land and permitting him to dispose of it if it does not at the same time create in him the attributes of our civilization pertaining to property. It is quite generally conceded that this can be done only by education.

I would not be just to myself or to our Government if I did not on this occasion say that after having allotted land to individual Indians the Government has done all in its power to protect them in its ownership. The policy itself was wrong; not the administration or the policy. It might have succeeded with a race which had the acquisitive sense, but with the Indian race the policy of the Government failed. Fixing the blame for the Indian's condition does nothing towards supplying a remedy. Criticism cannot of itself change the Indian's status. The future welfare of the Indian rests in education. The educated Indian has almost invariably made a good citizen. The policy pursued by most educational institutions that have attempted to educate the Indian has been as fundamentally unsound as the Government's policy pertaining to the protection of his property rights.

We all know that our own civilization is constantly changing. The general average of the changes has been for the better. We may deplore the fact that a desire for property, and acquisitive sense and pride in ownership, is fundamental in our civilization. Whatever may be our thought on that subject, the fact remains the same—it is fundamental.

We have taught the Indian the Christian religion. We have taught him our system of government. We have taught him our manual of arms. We have taught him our code of ethics. But we have not instilled in him the attributes of our civilization pertaining to property. With this fundamental weakness in our Government policy and our educational system we have wondered why the Indians as a race have remained a problem.

I agree that everything that has been taught the Indian was necessary, but I maintain that the one element of an education that was necessary for his economic success has been omitted. The Indian has great capacity for education and the fact that he has not acquired a sense of property is due to the fact that he has not learned the value of property. As a race the Indian has not learned that he must be self-sustaining before he can successfully discharge the duties of citizenship.

Why should we educate the Indian? We should educate him because it is the only thing that we can now do that will make any permanent contribution to the welfare of the Indian. We should educate the Indian because in so doing we will contribute not only to the individual Indian's welfare but to the welfare of his race and to the nation.

For a half century the Baptist Home Missionary Society of New York has been promoting the education of Indians through this school. It is very well to say that it is the duty of the Government to educate the Indian but the challenge goes far beyond the government. It is a challenge to every sect of the Christian religion. It is a challenge to every patriotic American.

Education will make the Indian a good citizen. It will make him self-sustaining. It will assure to him a life of service and happiness. Intelligence has overcome the

morbidity formerly attending the speculative philosophy pertaining to the problems of human relationship. It was said that inequalities between individuals were overcome only in the democracy of the grave. We know that that is not true. Schools have become the great levelers in America. Education eliminates class distinction.

Politically, the Indians are citizens of the United States and of the State where they reside. Education and education alone can prepare the Indian to take advantage of that equality of opportunity which all Americans enjoy.

To those of you who are graduating to-day, let me say that I have known people who knew all about what was in the books and notwithstanding that were almost foolish. In addition to the acquisitive sense of which I have been speaking, there is an ingredient in human understanding known as common sense which is the very foundation of all education and all achievement. Education cannot engender this quality unless you to some extent naturally possess it. It cannot be developed in you if you have no foundation for it.

Next to common sense comes the ability to work. You may be a fine looking person with a good mind and a good character. You may have rich, powerful parents, influential friends and relatives, but all this will avail you nothing if you have not the capacity to work. Work is the salt of happiness. No achievement brings pleasure unless you have worked for it. No position is lasting if you have not made it yourself. If you have common sense and know that you must succeed on your own merits, this quality will naturally create in you integrity and decency. If you expect to work and use common sense, there is no necessity for being a "trimmer" or attempting to accomplish results by shoddy or dishonest methods.

You may have all these qualities I have enumerated and still fail if you have not courage. Courage is a fundamental requirement of success. If you are brave and honest you will always look for the best in others and give to others the best that is in you. You will be kind and considerate and will forgive the shortcomings of others. If you love the human race, human beings will love you. Be yourself. Do not try to act a borrowed part. If you do so, you will deceive no one but yourself. I wish you Godspeed and happiness.