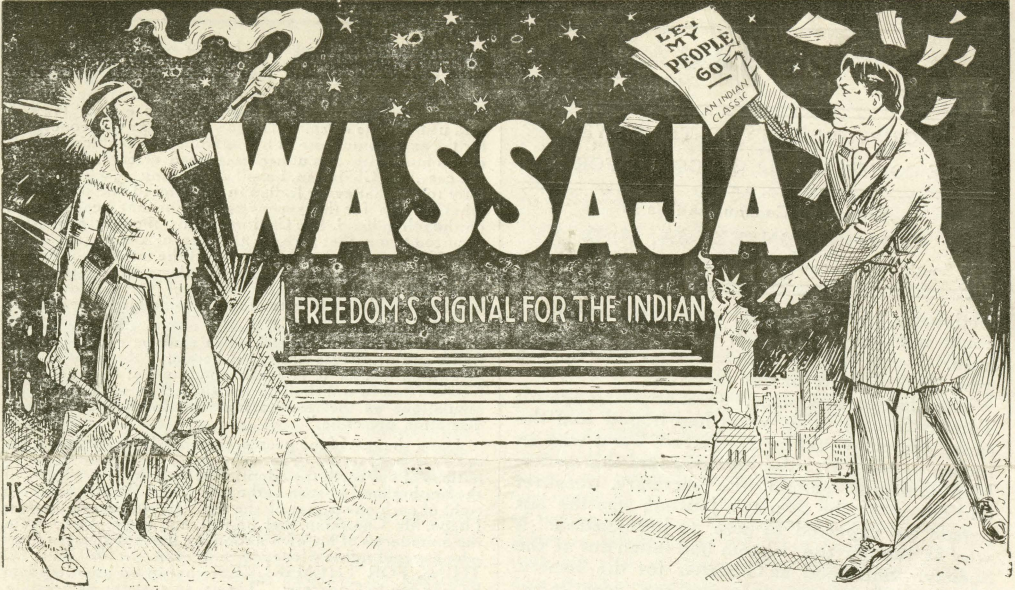


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Edited by Wassaja (Dr. Montezuma's Indian name, meaning "Signaling") an Apache Indian.

Vol. 4, No. 8 ISSUED MONTHLY November, 1919

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN INDIANS' CONFERENCE

Held at Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 2nd to 5th, 1919

The S. A. I. forcibly and unequivocally made themselves known that they are for the abolishment of the Indian Bureau, so that the Indians will be free from any arbitrary supervision and that they may enjoy the rights and privileges of citizenship. It was the largest gathering ever held by the Society. There were Indians from California, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Montana, Massachusetts, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota. It is safe to say, no such meeting was ever before held in the history of the Indian race. This is a wonderful age and this meeting means a great deal for the Indian people. It stirred up the fire of justice that WILL NEVER GO OUT, but it will glow with favor until the Indians are free.

The most notable interest manifested was oneness of mind in the business upon which we were seeking for. The California Indians did not want citizenship, but they wanted their wrongs adjusted. We hope in time they will understand what the Society stands for. There were two or three others who needed more light. They received more light from our standpoint before the conference adjourned. In previous meetings there was always a feeling of whether we accomplished anything. We worked on incidental matters, but upon the vital, we did not want to

be too impolite to the Indian Bureau. Last year we took a radical turn and this year we reached the limit of our contention—the abolishment of the Indian Bureau. The Society of American Indians has set the pace, now, let the Indians throughout the country work to have the Indian Bureau abolished. It is to the interest of the Indians and WE MUST DO IT. It is the greatest thing we can do for our race.

Another thing that was noticed was the presence of another generation of young Indians. They are wide awake and saw quickly the views presented at the meeting. Many new promising men and women spoke and were helpful to the Society. The evidence manifested indicates that the Society is not working in vain, and we should receive many new members.

Dr. Eastman made a wonderful success out of what seemed to be impossible with his beautiful play, "Conspiracy of Pontiac." Smattering practice of several hours was done and at the last moment it was quickly decided to have some one read the play, after which the curtain raised and the Indians exacted the portion read without saying a word. The curtain raised and fell eight times. It was a novel undertaking and the audience were greatly pleased. Dr. Eastman deserves all the praise for such a wonderful success at a moment's notice.

We regretted to see our former associate members absent from the meeting. The Society cannot get along without associate members. Also the missionaries were few. Dr. Hall of Fort Berthold, North Dakota, was there, but not in-

WASSAJA

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tionally, he was called when too late, for he could not stay any longer, as he had to catch a train. He is one of the few who has done a great deal of good for our race.

The election took place. (Not anything against Tommy Sloan.) The writer had hoped that the same officers would be re-elected, but it was an Indian meeting and the Indians ruled the matter. Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin, the secretary, treasurer and editor of the Society's Journal, was the last person we expected to give up her position. It was as though the bottom had fallen out of the Society. She stood as Gibraltar for the Society. She sacrificed more than we can ever know. Her health would not permit the continuance of her position. It is a loss that cannot be filled. The Society was staggered and we stagger still.

The following officers were elected:

President.....THOMAS L. SLOAN
 Vice-President.....JOHN CARL
 Secretary and Treasurer.....MR. BISHOP
 Editor of Journal.....Vacant
 Legislation.....HON. CHARLES CARTER
 Chairman Advisory Board.....REV. COOLIDGE

Some may dislike the slate, but let us be men and women. Let us stand with the majority and do our part in the principle object of the Society—**FREEDOM AND CITIZENSHIP** for the race of which we are a part.

EXCERPTS FROM AN ADDRESS

In Defense of the Rights of the Crow Indians and the Indians Generally, Before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, by Robert Yellowtail, September Ninth, Nineteen Nineteen

Mr. Chairman, it is peculiar and strange to me, however, that after such elaborate and distinct understandings, it should develop that today, after over half a century since our agreement, you have not upon your statute books, nor in your archives of law, so far as I know, one law that permits **US TO THINK FREE, ACT FREE, EXPAND FREE AND TO DECIDE FREE** without first having to go and ask a total stranger that you call the Secretary of the Interior in all humbleness and humiliation—"How about this, Mr. Secretary, can I have permission to do this, and, can I have permission to do that, etc?" Ah, Mr. Chairman! If you had given us an inkling then of what has since transpired, I am sure that our fathers would have then held their ground until every last one of them were dead, or until you saw fit to guarantee to us in more explicit assurances something more humane, something of that blessing of civil life, peculiar to this country alone, that you call "Americanism."

Mr. Chairman, your President but yesterday assured the people of this great country, and also the people of the whole world, that the right of self-determination shall not be denied to any people, no matter where they live, nor

how small or weak they may be, nor what their previous conditions of servitude may have been. He has stood before the whole world, for the past three years at least, as the champion of the rights of humanity and of the cause of the weak and dependent peoples of this earth. He has told us that this so-called League of Nations was conceived for the express purpose of lifting from the shoulders of burdened humanity this unnecessary load of care. If that is the case, Mr. Chairman, I shall deem it my most immediate duty to see that every Indian in the United States shall do what he can for the speedy passage of that measure but, on the other hand, Mr. Chairman, this thought has often occurred to me, that perhaps the case of the North American Indian may never have entered the mind of our great President when he uttered those solemn words; that perhaps in the final draft of this League of Nations document, a proviso might be inserted to read something like this:

"That in no case shall this be construed to mean that the Indians of the United States shall be entitled to the rights and privileges expressed herein, or the right of self-determination, as it is understood herein, but that their freedom and future shall be left subject to such rules and regulations as the Secretary of the Interior may in his discretion prescribe."

I, and the rest of my people, sincerely hope and pray that the President, in his great scheme of enforcing upon all nations of the earth the adoption of this great principle of the brotherhood of men and nations, and that the inherent right of each one is that of the right of self-determination; I hope, Mr. Chairman, that he will not forget that within the boundaries of his own nation are the American Indians who have no rights whatever—not even the **RIGHT TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES**—that in his great wisdom he may say to Congress: "Let us, as speedily as possible, cut out this idea of 'subjecting the lot of these people to the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior,' and let us henceforth give to these people also a share of this new birth of freedom which is about to dawn the world over."

Mr. Chairman, I hold that the Crow Indian Reservation is a separate semi-sovereign nation in itself, not belonging to any state, nor confined within the boundary lines of any state of the Union, and that until such proper cessions, as had been agreed to and as expressed in our covenant, have been duly complied with, no Senator or anybody else, so far as that is concerned, has any right to claim the right to tear us asunder by the continued introduction of bills here, without our consent, and simply because of our geographical proximity to his state or his home, or because his constituents prevail upon him to so act; neither has he the right to dictate to us what we shall do as our final homesteads, in this our last stand against the ever encroaching hand, nor continue to disturb our peace of mind by a constant agitation to deprive us of our lands, that were to begin with ours, not his, and not given to us by anybody. This nation should be only too ready, as an atonement for our treatment in the past, to willingly grant to the Indian people of this country, their unquestionable and undeniable right to determine how much of their own lands they shall retain as their homes and how much they shall dispose of to outsiders.

Mr. Chairman, the Crow Indians are at this moment making their last stand against the encroaching hand; they see their lands about to be snatched from them; they have for the past eighteen years witnessed many such attempts, but only for the vigilance of their friends here in Congress and elsewhere, have they been able to withhold and keep at a distance the aggressors. I am most certain that the gentlemen of this committee are conscious of the obligations that their fathers predecessors, and commissioners have placed upon their shoulders; that in the determination of this matter that affects the very existence of the Indians tomorrow, you will not forget that an agreement in writing, touching most strongly upon this question at issue, is somewhere in your archives of law, end that more than this, you, yourselves, penned every word of it, the Indians merely acquiescing at your behest.

Mr. Chairman, surely you will not deny, in this connection, that it is the undeniable right of all the Indian tribes of this country to be entitled to have a court in which to try out any claims the Indians may have against the Government, that arises out of treaties, agreements or acts of Congress, or which are due to losses or damages suffered by reason of wrongful acts of officials or employees of the Government, charged with the

care, custody or administration of Indian property. The task of procuring such court and thereafter of preparing, presenting and prosecuting therein the claims of all tribes, requires, first, the assistance of competent legal counsel, with both financial and legal ability, as well as talent, at their command, and, also, one who will stand ready to advance, if necessary, the required finances to properly and successfully conduct the prosecution of any of their claims.

Mr. Chairman, to accord them the right to select and employ such legal assistance, without any foreign interference whatsoever, is an inalienable right of every American Indian just as much as it is of every citizen of this country, and for anyone whomsoever to interfere with, or defeat; this right of self-protection and determination on the Indian's part, or for an official or other employe of a debtor government to do so, not only violates this fundamental right of the Indians, but raises a presumption of hostility, if nothing worse, on the part of the employe against the Indian; but, for the guardian of the Indian to assume this attitude toward his wards, when perhaps his very salary is being paid in part, if not wholly, out of the ward's funds, is seemingly such a perversion of justice as to justify the designation of the act as an anomaly. And thus, Mr. Chairman, in the very nature of things, if the Indians are deprived of this right to select free-handed, and employ legal counsel, responsible to them solely for honest, disinterested, efficient, service, little hope of success remains to the Indians. If the selection of counsel, of the terms of service, the kind and amount of compensation are dictated and controlled by the debtor government and employes, surely such counsel is sorely fettered in the performance of loyal service to the Indians, and in such a case the declaration of one of the Indian lawyers, formerly a tribal attorney, NOW A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, AND AS GOOD A CITIZEN AS EVER WALKED IN THIS COUNTRY, is as follows:

Mr. Hastings said: "They have certain differences with the department. They cannot be represented up here before the committees of Congress. They cannot send an attorney here; they cannot send their tribal counsel here. There is no way for them to present their claims to Congress now without the permission of the Secretary of the Interior."

In response to the views of a member of the House, opposing him, Mr. Hastings said: "The gentleman has not had the experience upon these Indian matters some of the rest of us have had. Personally, I have lived under the department every day of my life. We have been under the supervision of the Interior Department down there in Oklahoma always, AND IF YOU ARE GOING TO ALLOW THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO PICK THE ATTORNEY, TO

LET HIM BE HAND-PICKED, YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE NONE AT ALL, BECAUSE THE ATTORNEY THEN MUST GO DOWN AND FIRST GET ORDERS FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND THE COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, ELSE HE WILL NOT BE EMPLOYED THE NEXT YEAR. HIS EMPLOYMENT DEPENDS UPON HIS REPRESENTING THEIR VIEWS AND NOT THE VIEWS OF THE INDIAN."

He made his position clearer still. He said: "I have always contended that these people with these large interests ought to be represented by a high class attorney, and I believe they ought to have something to say about naming him. Let me say to the gentlemen, for years I was attorney for the Cherokee tribe of Indians, and representing them before the Committee of Congress and before the departments and before the courts here, I do not believe that any tribal representative ought to be dictated to by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs or the Secretary of the Interior." After an interruption Mr. Hastings proceeded, "I will say that all these tribal attorneys that are now employed where approval has to be made by the Secretary of the Interior, they cannot, of course, represent any other views than those entertained by the department."

Thus, from the foregoing, it is plain that the history of Indian litigation proves conclusively that the Indians are altogether capable of selecting their own counsel, and it should not be denied them. To select the counsel is the Indian's right, inherently fixed; to deprive him thereof is essentially a wrong—an injustice, and I tempted to say, ALMOST A CRIME.

Now, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, permit me to say that the Indians of the country will grow better and become better, more intelligent and useful citizens, just in proportion as you make it possible for them to be FREER AND HAPPIER; just in proportion as you permit fewer thrusts and snatches at their lands; just in proportion as you allow them to exercise more intellectual liberty; just in proportion as you permit them PERSONAL LIBERTY, FREE THOUGHT AND THE FREEST EXPRESSION THEREOF, for free thought never gave us anything else but the truth; just exactly the same as your own race has grown better; just in proportion to their exercise of freedom of body, of mind and thought, plus the freest expression thereof, the history of all nations tell us that they have grown better only in proportion as they have grown FREE: and I am here, gentlemen, to advocate that proposition for the American Indian, who is still in bondage as a political slave; by this great Government as an intellectual slave and as an intellectual serf; and now, gentlemen, I ask of you, has not that time arrived, when we ought to begin at least to think of giving to these people more of the essence of that happier life as you live it, and to permit them to enjoy a little more of that enviable condition of freedom peculiar only to American civil life that you call "Americanism?" In short, Mr. Chairman and

Gentlemen of the Committee, I mean to say, that, not until every American Indian is clothed with UNCONDITIONAL AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP, not until you can truly say that he is full-fledged in that respect, enjoying its rights, privileges and immunities and discharging its responsibilities, the same as any other citizen of this, his native land, can the Indians themselves say, that THEY ARE FREE; nor as I see it, gentlemen, American citizenship, testing one hundred per cent pure, means nothing else than freedom; FREEDOM IN THE BROADEST AND MOST COMPREHENSIVE SENSE OF THE WORD.

Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, there are certain conditions of ability to be demonstrated, certain patriotic requirements of a sacrificing nature, also to be demonstrated; if so, I reply by saying to you, look the country over and in every field of endeavor leading up from private enterprises on up through the different departments of the Government, and continuing on up to the halls of Congress, and you will find him most successfully competing with the best that this nation has; surely he has demonstrated beyond any doubt whatsoever his ability as a man, and even now the name of one of them is being mentioned as a presidential possibility. If, on the other hand, Mr. Chairman, the unshirking performance of military duty be a requirement, then I say to you gentlemen, YOU OWE HIM HIS PAPERS RIGHT THIS MINUTE, for in every battle since the revolution on up and to, and including the one just over, he has fought, AND ON JUST SO MANY BATTLEFIELDS HE LIES BURIED.

Gentlemen, your own General Pershing saw fit to pin upon their breasts, in recognition of their distinguished services, every cross of honor in existence, excepting, of course, the iron cross. Now, gentlemen, that in brief, is the manner in which we have conducted ourselves; then, are we not worthy of your most affectionate friendship, and do you not think that we are entitled to our demands—that is the big question?

My people are awaiting for that day beyond that misty, hazy and cloudy horizon to dawn, when they can say with all prouddness that they, too, ARE FULL-FLEDGED AMERICAN CITIZENS.

Gentlemen of the Committee, we now entrust the verdict in our case to your kind, thoughtful and careful consideration. We hope we will find friends among you, that will plead our cause in the Congress of the United States whenever such cause hangs in the balance.

ROBERT YELLOWTAIL, Wyola, Montana.

THOMAS L. SLOAN

If there was ever a man that made the Indian Bureau feel uneasy, it was Tommy Sloan. If there was ever a man who stood up for the Indians, it was Tommy Sloan. The Indian Bureau and Tommy Sloan mix like oil and water. They are incompatible on matters pertaining to Indians. Who is this man Sloan, anyway? He is the man who ran for the Commissionship of Indian Affairs and got left. The question at that time was whether the Indian Office lost anything or the Indians gained anything. It is safe to say, the Indians did not lose anything, but gained a closer relation with Tommy Sloan.

Tommy Sloan is our newly elected President of the Society of American Indians. No one elected him, but he elected himself. We were perfectly satisfied to have the same officers to serve for the ensuing year. Not so. Fate drifted. Half an hour, this man Sloan held his audience spell-bound as he clearly, logically and legally laid down the relation of the Indians to the Indian Bureau and how the Indian Bureau system mis-

treats the Indians. Loyal were his words by his knowledge of law. It was a speech never to be forgotten. His eloquent speech made him President of the Society of American Indians.

No better Indian is more widely known to us than Tommy Sloan. He has been rolled over, tested and found to be true to his race. Others would have given up in sticking to the Indians, but Tommy stuck. He made good what others said he could not do. That is the stuff Hampton injects into its pupils. Mr. Sloan is a self-made Indian man; he worked and made his way from a reservation to the highest profession, that of attorney-at-law. He is a living contradiction of the Indian Bureau's faith in the Indians, that the law of evolution must not be overlooked in the progress of the Indian race. Tommy Sloan believes true to Edgar Guest's inspired words:

"There are thousands who'll tell you it cannot be done—
There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands who'll point to you, one by one
The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in, with a bit of a grin,
And take off you coat and go to it.
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That 'cannot be done,' and—you'll do it!"

Tommy believes in evolution, but he does not believe in taking hundred and thousands of years before an Indian can become a lawyer. The Indian cause from now on must be fought on a legal basis. For that reason, it is well that Mr. Sloan is elected President of the Society of American Indians. Former officers of the Society have laid the foundation of the S. A. I. splendidly, and now the Society is ready for effective work. It is the duty of the members and friends of the Indians to stand back of President Sloan and help him in the great cause of freedom and effectual citizenship for the aboriginal Americans. "Tommy," as we call him because we know him so well, will be faithful to his call as President of the S. A. I., as he has been loyal to his blood—the Indian race. He will fight the Indian Bureau to the finish and NEVER FALTER WHERE INDIANS' RIGHTS ARE INVOLVED.

A VERY TIMELY LETTER

DEAR DOCTOR:—The intelligent manner in which you fight is brought through WASSAJA to free the Indians, needs no comment. Let us hope that you will succeed in overthrowing the Indian Bureau. It is only a nest to reward politicians. Its day of usefulness is past.

Let the Indians take care of themselves under the protection given to all others. Wishing you every success, allow me to be a WELL WISHER.

WOULD BUILD A HOME FOR CHILDREN

The "American Indian Christian Teepee Mission Building Funds" will be glad to receive donations, to help build a home for poor Indian children, so that they may have a home and be able to get their secular education in near-by public schools. Send all donations for the cause to

REV. RED FOX SKIUHUSHU,
Box 171, Toppenish, Washington.