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

Vol. 8, No. 1 **ISSUED MONTHLY** **January, 1922**

THE ONLY WAY TO GET THE INDIANS OUT OF THE CONTROL OF THE INDIAN BUREAU, IS TO GET THEM OUT OF THE CONTROL OF THE INDIAN BUREAU

OUR INDIANS AND THEIR FUTURE

BY BRUCE KINNEY, Q. D.

Joint Division Secretary of the American Baptist Home Mission and Publication Societies, New York City

Relatively few people ever see the Navajo and Hopi Indians in their native environment. The reservations of these two tribes join each other; the Hopi being entirely in Arizona, and the Navajo partly in Arizona and partly in New Mexico. For the most part the habitat lies far removed from the main arteries of travel. The only white people who live upon the reservations are those in the employ of the Government in the various departments of its Indian Service, the licensed Indian traders, and the missionaries. In these days of automobiles the Indians are somewhat easier of access than in the days when horse-drawn vehicles were alone available.

I recently drove [with 'an auto more than four hundred miles through these reservations, and saw only four other machines on the road. These Indians, unlike some other tribes, have not as yet, to any great extent, indulged themselves in automobiles. This will give some idea of the remoteness of the country from civilization in these days of the ubiquity of the automobile. At one place we were at least one hundred and twenty-five miles from the nearest railroad point. There are, of course, occasional visitors throughout the year. Relative to other times crowds visit the Hopi during the famous Snake Dance which occurs in August. This has attracted the attention of wealthy people troubled with ennui, those thirsting for "something differ-

ent," and students of ethnology from over the world. These visitors usually come for one day and hastily go away after the public part of the dance is over. They think they have seen the Snake Dance, but the fact is that they have seen only the culminating part of it. It has been going on for days prior, chiefly in secret kivas underground where no visitors, Indians or whites, are allowed except such of the Hopi as are participants of these sacred and secret ceremonies.

These ceremonies are in reality a prayer for rain. According to the Hopi, a great snake controls the rain-fall. They live in a fearfully dry country, where every drop of water is valuable. At a certain time the Hopi go out upon the desert and capture a number of rattle-snakes, and for days perform their varied ceremonies with them, and on the last day do the dance with these live snakes dangling from their mouths. The principal human participants are priests and priestesses, who have been trained for their highly specialized parts for several years. When the dance is finished the snakes are released and the priests drink a native concoction which acts as a strong emetic, and some strange scenes follow. The belief is that if these real snakes are treated properly during their captivity they will return to the great snake who controls the rain-fall, and the good report will insure adequate moisture for the following season.

What is seen above ground is disgusting, but what takes place below ground is infinitely worse, if we are to believe what is told us by those who formerly participated. Much that is written about these dances is grossly superficial. For example, an account published in a great magazine in the fall of 1920, alleged to give a report of this dance as it

WASSAJA

Vol. 8, No. 1

JANUARY, 1922

A Monthly Publication Devoted to the Best Interest of
the First Americans—the Red Men

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took place during the previous summer. It mentioned as a prominent participant in these rites a former famous official, who, to our certain knowledge, has had nothing to do with the Snake Dance for twelve years. This may have been unknown to the aforesaid writer, but to some writers a fact or two like that has no significance. If there is so much misinformation abroad with reference to their most conspicuous rite, how much more misunderstanding is there with reference to these two tribes as a whole.

Our American people do not know the facts about the Indian's history, his life or his characteristics, and hence do not deal sympathetically with his ambitions. There is little inducement for him to become more than "a hewer of wood and a drawer of water." Most of the Indian leaders have become such only by breaking the governmental leading strings. I know of no Government provision designed to help an Indian get more than a common school education. We cannot expect Indians who have only this education to become leaders in modern life, any more than we expect white people with such limited training to become such leaders, unless we are willing to give the Indian credit of making better uses of his opportunities than a white man does.

I recently heard some white men recounting how some young Navajo Indians attacked the store of an Indian trader, murdered him, set fire to the store after looting it, and left the body of the trader there to burn. Then one of the young men said, "The Government ought to wipe those Indians off the face of the earth for such bloody crimes." I then asked him if he read the daily papers. He replied, "Of course I do. I claim to be of average intelligence." Then I told him that in these days he could not even glance at the headlines of any metropolitan paper, any day, without reading an account of just as atrocious crimes on the part of white men. Then I asked him why all the Indians should be wiped off the face of the earth because of the crime of two or three of their number, any more than that all the white people should be similarly treated because so many of their numbers were just as cruel and criminal? He had not thought of that.

In what is supposed to be up-to-date literature on the subject, I have twice recently seen the charge that most educated Indians revert to the blanket. Any one who says that simply does not know the facts. He is twenty-five years behind the times. General Pratt, so long the head of Carlisle Indian School, when recently asked about this matter said: "The fact is that most of the graduates of Carlisle are now out in the world living as happy and useful citizens. It is true that some have gone back to the tribal life. That is natural and is the logical result of the system pursued by the Indian Bureau."

The Hon. Cato Sells, for the past eight years Commissioner of Indian Affairs under the Government, says in his annual report for 1920: "Too much has been said about the Indian graduates going back to the blanket. Any assumption that more than a negligible percentage are non-progressive is unwarranted. Considering the

effects of previous environment, habits and prejudice, the school-trained Indian compares favorably with the average white student, whose home surroundings as a rule are generally to his advantage."

The fact that an Indian wears his hair long is no sign that he is non-progressive. This may simply be a concession on his part to the older Indian. The worst that can be said about the educated Indian is that unless he is christianized he is likely to take on all the vices of the white man. Who is responsible for that? Of course, the vicious and pernicious influences on the reservations come from educated Indians. The same is true of white people. Other things being equal, the most dangerous criminal in the land is the one having the best education. He has so much more knowledge and skill to invest in his criminal and nihilistic activities.

Much of the Government's treatment of the Indian, while well intentioned for the most part, tends to make him dependent rather than independent and self-reliant. He will never be able to take his part in the world until the Government ceases to take care of him and his property, and begins to treat him as it treats white men—giving him the same privileges and responsibilities that white men have, and no more of either and no less.

Our long series of treaties with the Indians broken by the white men has no offset in similar treaties which have been broken by Indians. On the other hand, the fact is that scores of times United States soldiers have been called out to PROTECT the white man in his violation of Indian treaties, but never once to PUNISH him.

In 1865 Kit Carson and his soldiers carved the record of the march on the rocks of Kean's Canyon—a record still to be seen. In 1868 the treaty of Fort Sumner, New Mexico, was made with them by which they were restored to their former lands where white men could not make a living. They have prospered and increased in numbers and self-reliance largely because they have not been subjected to the humiliation of rations, and have suffered fewer of the limitations which are, and always have been, the lot of most of the Indians.

In this treaty the Government promised to provide among other things, a school and a teacher for every thirty Navajo Indian children. After fifty-two years there are today not fewer than 5,000 Navajo children of school age who have no possibility of such privilege.

Several denominations are working among the Navajos, but large visible results have not as yet followed their work. There are several reasons why this is so. In the first place, the Navajos are very fanatical in their heathenism. And it should be borne in mind that the heathenism of the Indians is just as gross, superstitious and cruel as heathenism anywhere in the world. I helped to bury the bones of a Navajo, who, with his horse, was killed by lightning. A year had passed and not an Indian would touch that dead body, or approach that spot possessed by an evil spirit.

In the second place they are semi-nomadic. They follow their flocks of sheep and goats to the various altitudes at different seasons of the year to get the best pasturage. It is almost impossible for a missionary to keep in touch with such people so as to win them for Christ. Our hope lies in christian schools which will provide an education for the thousands not now provided for, and at the same time rear a christian constituency.

It is to be hoped that the new Secretary of the Interior, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, are possessed of a comprehensive knowledge of our Indians and their affairs, and a high purpose to provide for their speedy absorption into our national life. It is passing strange that since 1820 we have allowed 20,000,000 foreigners to come to our shores

and become citizens after five years probation, while these Indians who were here before our fathers came four hundred years ago, have not been assimilated into our national life. Eight thousand of the Indians fought in the recent World War that the world might have the privilege of a democracy, which has not been granted them. There is something wrong here. The many brilliant Indians in various parts of our national life prove that the difficulty is not with the Indians. Should we not recast our entire thinking about and treatment of these "First Americans?"

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"HEAP MUCH POW-WOW"

Interested Friend:—"Well, what is the news from Washington?"

Wassaja:—"I understand there are three Indian bills to be introduced in this session of Congress."

Interested Friend:—"What do those bills convey?"

Wassaja:—"One bill is to empower the Indians to hold a council meeting without being interfered with. Another bill is not to allow tribal funds to be expended without the approval of the Indians. The third bill is to dissect the Indian Bureau, and thus, piece by piece, deliver them to the different departments and to the Welfare League. That is, place the agricultural department of the Indian Bureau in the agricultural department of the Interior; the same relative to irrigation, reclamation, forestry, natural resources, lands, funds, leases, etc. and so on, and if there is anything left of the Indian Bureau transfer it to the Welfare League."

Interested Friend:—"Doctor, I presume you will be happy when the Indian Bureau is going to be wined out of existence in that way?"

Wassaja:—"Transferring does not mean wiping a thing out of existence."

Interested Friend:—"What objection have you?"

Wassaja:—"I do not see one word about abolishment of the control of the Indians by the Indian Bureau, or their citizenship."

Interested Friend:—"Does not the bill have that object in view?"

Wassaja:—"No. It is the most devilish way to hang onto the Indian people and use them as tools."

Interested Friend:—"Do you think it is a scheme?"

Wassaja:—"Yes, I do. It is another way of eel-like squirming out of abolishing the Indian Bureau. It is gently transferring things from the Indian Bureau to other places with everything intact."

Interested Friend:—"Do you think that is right?"

Wassaja:—"It is right so far as the Indian Bureau is concerned. The employes will go along and still hold their jobs."

Interested Friend:—"What other flaws do you see in this spurious bill?"

Wassaja:—"All I can see, if the bill is passed, is that it will not help the Indians."

Interested Friend:—"Why not?"

Wassaja:—"For the reason, it is like taking a bonfire to pieces and placing them here and there to create more bon-fires."

Interested Friend:—"What do you mean?"

Wassaja:—"To tear away, piece by piece, of the Indian Bureau and finally transpose what is left to the Welfare League is such a complication that there is danger of weakening the object and purpose of aiding and benefitting the Indians."

Interested Friend:—"Then the bill was not weighed in the matter?"

Wassaja:—"The bill does not show helpful and true interest in the Indians or knowledge of the Indians."

Interested Friend:—"How is that?"

Wassaja:—"Material things can be disposed of in that way, but human beings, where human rights are involved, and where human rights have been wronged, it cannot be justified by picking it to pieces and disposing of them to other departments. That is conspiracy, is evading the righteous law of God and man."

Interested Friend:—"Now, don't get mad. Give me more ideas on the bill."

Wassaja:—"It is scattering the Indian business to different places."

Interested Friend:—"Does not the bill simplify matters?"

Wassaja:—"It does not. It would only lead the Indians into deep water."

Interested Friend:—"How do you make that out?"

Wassaja:—"The Indians will have a terrible time in seeking these different departments to transact their business. They will be compelled to walk around Washington, and they would be puzzled with their extra correspondence."

Interested Friend:—"Is not this bill seeking to reorganize Indian affairs?"

Wassaja:—"It does seem like it, but it does not sever the chain that hangs around the Indians, necks, but rather, it will add more chains to their necks."

Interested Friend:—"What makes you think so?"

Wassaja:—"Naturally these different departments where the Indians' interests will be transferred, they will deal separately with the Indians, which means more chains for the Indians' necks."

Interested Friend:—"The Government is seeking for economy. Would this plan lessen the cost to the Government?"

Wassaja:—"I cannot see where it will lessen the Indian appropriation. The same employes in the Indian Bureau will necessarily be transferred, because they would know how to handle Indian matters better than any one."

Interested Friend:—"Coming down to hard tacks, what would you do to get out of this Indian business and save the Government millions of dollars?"

"Wassaja:—"It seems hard to answer that question, but it is the simplest thing on the face of the earth?"

Interested Friend:—"Quick, give it to me!"

Wassaja:—"I would abolish the Indian Bureau, and never think one moment of going into such vast complications as this bill would necessitate."

Interested Friend:—"But just think of the work that will mean."

Wassaja:—"It would mean no harder work than transferring the Indian Bureau into the different departments of the Government to perpetuate the weakening and ruining system."

Interested Friend:—"Do you not think the persons who worked on this bill knew what they were doing?"

Wassaja:—"They may know Indian matters theroretically, but practically, they are way off."

Interested Friend:—"What practical thing have they overlooked?"

Wassaja:—"Freedom and citizenship of the Indian people. 'The highest and noblest rights of man.'"

Interested Friend:—"Then you think this bill will not get the Indians their freedom and citizenship?"

Wassaja:—"That is my candid opinion of the bill. It will work the other way."

Interested Friend:—"Well, I am somewhat discouraged. I thought this bill would certainly help the Indians to get their freedom and citizenship?"

Wassaja:—"No, sir; there is no freedom and citizenship of the Indian people until all strings that are tied to their necks are cut and the Indians are placed on their own responsibilities."

Interested Friend:—"The question with me on that point, are the Indians ready for that radical action?"

Wassaja:—"Why, certainly! They were ready at the time of Columbus, and they are ready today, but if the Indian Bureau exists or be it re-organized, the Indians will ever remain as wards, with no hope of freedom and citizenship—DOOM WOULD BE THEIR FATE."

Interested Friend:—"Then you advocate immediate withdrawal of control of the Indian people, which would leave them free to look after themselves?"

Wassaja:—"That is exactly what I believe. It is so silly, unreasonable, nonsensical and useless waste of public money to play charity on the Indian people, when they are more able to take care of themselves than you or I."

Interested Friend:—"Why, you don't say so?"

Wassaja:—"Yes, I do. I know the Indians. They are equal to anything. All they need is a chance. The Indian Bureau and this proposed bill will not give them a chance."

Interested Friend:—"It is so cruel and unjust to play with the Indians. Being new in the interest of the Indians, I feel the weight of your words. I do not want to take up any more of your time. Some other date I want to ask you more questions about your people."

A GREAT CRY FOR HELP!

"The Starving Blackfeet Indians" is the heading of a pamphlet written by James Willard Schultz, and sent out by "The National Association to Help the Indian" of Los Angeles, Cal., has reached us.

Mr. Schultz states: "That that the Blackfeet being in this pitiable condition, is all the fault of the Indian Bureau in Washington"

Having read the contents of his article, we are moved to ask aid for these Indians. When a person is starving, there is no time to ask any questions or delay a moment. IT IS TO HELP. Now, if you are a friend of the Indians, here is an urgent call to prove your friendship and HAVE OTHERS DO THE SAME.

As "Wassaja" has ever stated, that when the Indians will need the most help the Indian Bureau will drop them. At this crisis of between life and death of the Blackfeet, the help must come from the outside of the Indian Bureau, but we hope Congress will immediately do something for them.

The pamphlet says, "The funds should be sent directly to the First National Bank of Browning, Montana."

JUST A FAIRY TALE ON McDOWELL

McDowell, Arizona, December 24, 1921.

DEAR DOCTOR MONTEZMA:—

Just to tell you of a fairy tale that has come true on McDowell. You remember, of hearing Mr. Sells, the late Commissioner of Indian Affairs, purchasing cattle in Texas and placing them on the McDowell Reservation, and telling us Indians that the cattle were for us, and that they would be our personal property after the Government had been reimbursed. But since then the cattle have been neglected, and when the dry season swept over the country, they did not have the proper food and care and they died of starvation and disease, which included the Indians' cattle and horses. Of course, some one is to be blamed—Cato Sells and the Indian Bureau. Poor judgment and expenditure for these cattle has cost us Indians dearly.

Help us? Not at all! It ruined us. Now, after being pastured upon our land, the remaining U. S. cattle are being rounded up to be sold, without our consent. But, oh, how sweet Cato Sells' words flowed from his lips when he informed us that he was going to pasture 250 head of cattle on our land, because he had a special endearing interest in our welfare. But now, unbeknown to us, like a thief, the promise relative to these cattle, is being broken. Dear me, our ground is not safe anywhere on the globe!

No wonder the old Indians say: "You cannot rely on the white people—they talk too much and too noisy." We young Indian people never paid much attention to their belief, but I tell you WE DO NOW. Many falsehoods have been told us, not to disbelieve, but to have implicit faith in the Indian Bureau system. I feel like saying, as some of the old discouraged Indians say: "Kill us off and be done with us, then no fighting talk on us Indians as if they didn't know what to do for us."

Doctor, I didn't expect to talk so much, but I am anxious and in earnest. I want you to know how the Indian Bureau slipped by the cattle project that they boast so much of for the Indian people.

I do not think any of the Indians wrote you about this matter, so I took the liberty and privilege of writing to you about it.

I am, sincerely your true friend,

MRS. NELLIE H. DAVIS.