

REPORT

OF THE
THIRTIETH ANNUAL

LAKE MOHONK CONFERENCE

FRIENDS OF THE INDIAN AND OTHER
DEPENDENT PEOPLES

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Reported by Miss Lillian D. Powers
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LAKE MOHONK CONFERENCE OF FRIENDS OF THE INDIAN
AND OTHER DEPENDENT PEOPLES
1912.

Address of

Edwin Schaub and one
working at Indian Service
from Oneida, N.Y.

He speaks to and
Reservations

court and a former justice of the peace are also under indictment for participation in this forgery.

On the 29th day of December, 1911, I filed suit on behalf of Wisey Harjo, a Seminole mixed-blood, to cancel a deed to which her name had been forged for her surplus allotment. Twenty-three days later the party who had committed the forgery (the deed running to attorneys as compensation for professional services rendered in another case) laid in wait for Wisey Harjo and her husband, Muthoya, as they journeyed from my office to their home in the country, and murdered them. He is now serving a life sentence for his crime. I have cited these cases to show the conditions as they existed.

During the two years that I have represented these people eleven persons have been convicted of forgery and other crimes against the allottees and sentenced to the penitentiary for terms ranging from two to fifteen years. Approximately \$250,000 worth of land has been recovered either by suit or quitclaim deeds, though more than that amount, that will never be restored on account of various militating causes, has been wrongfully taken from the allottees. Public sentiment, however, is swinging back into the beaten paths of law and order; the "get-their-hand-between-death-and-the-grave-judge" failed of renomination and the forgery of deeds, in the Seminole Nation, is no longer a favorite pastime.

If Congress would adopt a provision amending existing laws so as to restrict and wholly control the leasing of inalienable land, proceed with the sale of surplus allotments, and supervise the disbursement of the proceeds, applying it to the improvement of homesteads, hundreds of thousands of dollars would be saved annually to these people.

I believe if this were done and the homestead allotments made to remain inalienable in perpetuity, that in the final dissolution of the tribal government we would find these allottees residing on their well-improved homesteads, merged into the citizenship of the country, a happy and contented people.

Another matter of tremendous importance to the Seminoles is the problem of taxation. Because of an injunction to restrain the collection of taxes on alienable land in the Seminole Nation, and other test suits affecting titles, recently decided adversely by the Supreme Court of the United States, few of the allottees who still own taxable land have ever paid taxes. The delinquent taxes with the penalties assessed now amount to from fifty dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars per capita. These allottees are wholly without means and in hundreds of cases their land will be sold at tax sales, unless Congress gives them relief. Each

Seminole has between five and six hundred dollars now in the treasury of the United States, which can only be paid to them by the Secretary of the Interior upon authority from Congress. It is earnestly hoped that every one concerned in the welfare of these people will lend his aid and co-operation toward the accomplishment early in the next Congress of those things which will best promote the interests and serve the present urgent needs of these Indians. (Applause.)

THE CHAIRMAN: The next speaker will be Mr. EDWIN SCHWANANDORE of the Indian Service, Washington, who is himself a Wisconsin Oneida Indian.

ADDRESS OF MR. SCHWANANDORE

To understand the true cause of our condition we must first look into our heredity as well as to our environment, for these are the two great forces that mould our lives. But what heredity has done or will do for us is altogether under the control of nature for we cannot select our own parents, nor are we responsible for our color or nationality, nor can we justly claim that our intellect is either inferior or superior to that of our parents. But our rise and fall depends greatly upon the nature of our environment and to the extent that we yield to the nature of our environment; and we cannot escape from this fact because our environment is the food that we absorb, which nourishes our mind. We cannot deny that all our changes, whether they be for the better or for the worse, are determined by the surroundings in which our habits are cultivated, and it is equally true that whatever energy cultivates our mind must come from our environment, and that whatever we may absorb for the mental stimulus of our environment must either elevate or degenerate our lives. Hence, I claim that by bringing the Indians into direct contact with civilization by changing their surroundings, they will soon cease to be savages and will adjust themselves to the new conditions, for we know that a change in our surroundings can so react upon hereditary influences that it is possible for us to emerge from ignorance into civilization. That it is possible for any of us to become either good or bad, depends greatly upon the nature of our environments. Is it not a fact that Dr. Montezuma of Chicago is an Apache by birth, but by changing his environment he became one of many prominent physicians that we have in this country to-day? Does not this demonstrate that heritage does not bar Indians from becoming civilized? Does this not show that when an Indian is placed

under favorable circumstances that he will become useful and lead an independent life? It did not take this poor Apache three or four hundred years to acquire civilization either, but he simply fell on the good soil and brought forth good fruit.

But you may say, how can we bring these people into direct contact with civilization? I say, destroy the reservation system, which breeds ignorance and vice and allow civilization instead of ignorance to dominate over these people. But some say civilization will work hardships on these people. Is it reasonable to suppose that more comfort can be derived from ignorance than from civilization? Is it reasonable to think that civilization will bring greater hardships on a man than ignorance? Look at the two from any point that you may. Is your condition not preferable to his? Is wisdom not preferable to ignorance? I am not an atheist; if the Bible is true, then will it be hardship on these people to take their religious dances away and substitute true religion in its stead, for many of these so-called religious dances are nothing short of criminal in their character where men and women expose themselves to indignities and to which boys and girls are invited to look on? The laws of God forbid us teaching idolatry, while the laws of the country ought at least to forbid such a public display of immorality.

No storm of human slavery has ever appeared before the horizon of human liberty that has so completely annihilated the race as that of the reservation system. Slavery is no parallel with that of the reservation system. We deprecate slavery and yet slavery carries with it some of the chief elements that constitute civilization. Slavery taught the black man how to work, which is the foundation upon which true civilization can be built. It taught him obedience, which is necessary to be a good citizen, and endurance, without which nothing can be accomplished. Moreover, he was brought directly into contact with the civilization of which he was to become a part. In fact, while in bondage he was able to acquire all the rudiments of civilization and when he stepped out from bondage he was strong enough to carry his own burden. While on the other hand, the reservation system contains all the elements that are necessary to destroy manhood. The very things which may have appeared to minister to their growth in civilization, the very forces with which these people are compelled to associate, when their true nature appears are really nothing but destructive elements.

The reservation system prevents these people from mingling with other people from whom they might learn the arts of civilization, prevents them from exchanging their ideas with those of other people, which expands the mind and stimulates

to new efforts for improvements, prevents their children from knowing what the nation is and what it demands of them, and prevents them from learning the language of the country. Above all, their spiritual welfare has been neglected, and what good can come out from the throne of the Devil? The perfect economy of this nation is surely for once at fault when it encourages these people to produce nothing for their own good or for the general good, but live and live luxuriously at the expense of other people. The moment you made these people to rely on an external aid for their living, that moment you disobeyed the laws of human nature. They began to fall from lack of exercise, both mentally and physically, for they are so placed where mental improvement is an impossibility, where physical activity is not a necessity and where ultimately by the stern law of human nature that unused organ must fall into a degenerate condition.

In the sense of economy alone, is it not better to train these people to earn their own living rather than simply to be consumers or parasites? What are your great institutions of learning for? Are they not for the purpose of training your children to be producers as well as to be useful in the community in which they may live? If these people are to become a part or this great nation and assume the same responsibilities as those of other people, is it not right that they should have the same advantages and training that you receive? But woe unto the poor and weak in this land of the free, of churches, of schools and law, where justice seems to prostitute itself in the service of the Devil! Since I am forced to come to this world and assume the same responsibilities as those of other people, I claim to have a right to share with you the things which God had bestowed upon all men—liberty, equality in securing justice by the laws of the country in which I live, and equality in sharing with you the benefits that any institution may afford for the betterment of the human family, but to which you have denied me. We speak of law and justice, but where is law and justice, when my ancestors, born and raised in this country, knowing no other land, could not acquire here any rights that would place them on an equality with the race that had displaced them of their heritage, but restriction after restriction is placed upon them until they appear to be like flies on spiders' webs to be devoured at some convenient time? For centuries these people have been kept away from civilization under pretence of protecting their welfare, so that they are not as yet ready to become citizens. Their welfare is worth more than civilization to them, then why attempt to change their condition at all? Once their dominion extended from the Atlantic to the Pacific and how much land

can they call their own to-day under government protection and how much civilization have they acquired during this period of benevolent assimilation?

We say they are not inclined to adopt civilization. Is it not reasonable to suppose that if a man is born and raised in Japan that he would be a Japanese in habits and costume? that he would follow their mode of living and occupation? Or is it reasonable to suppose that if a man is born and raised in Chicago that he would be an Indian in habits and costume? No, but he is very likely to adopt the habits and costume of those who are directly in contact with him, regardless of his nationality or color. Now is it not reasonable to suppose that if an Indian is born and raised among Indians that he would be an Indian in habits and costume, that he would follow their mode of living and occupation? We say these people are degenerates, and so they are to some extent. But are we not all subject to the laws of human nature? The tendency for every soul is to degenerate. We are all born sinners and conditions are such that we must continually swim against the current and if one is deprived of the use of his faculties by ignorance, he will soon sink to the bottom of degradation, and if there is no Christianity to counteract our evil natures, then we are on the fair way to destruction. We say they are ignorant, and so they are. But how can a man escape from ignorance if he has never cultivated his mind? If you neglect to cultivate your garden, how shall it escape from running to weeds and waste? And just so it is with us. If we neglect to cultivate our mind, how shall we escape from ignorance and feebleness? Now this same rule applies to you as well as to me, and why should an Indian be an exception to any of the laws of human nature? If he is unproductive, how can a man without education, untrained to do any kind of work, be productive? You must admit that whatever stage of perfection that one may reach in life can only be so accomplished by practice and training. (Applause.)

At this point, Mr. W. R. JOHNSTON, Field Superintendent of the Mission to the Navajo and other Indian Tribes, Tolhaco, Arizona, spoke on the subject of "The Navajo—His country, his property and his future."

THE CHAIRMAN: This is the final address concerning Indian matters. We have one address remaining on the Philippine question. Major GEORGE H. SHELTON, Assistant to the Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the War Department, will address us at this time.

THE PHILIPPINE PROBLEM

ADDRESS OF MAJOR GEORGE H. SHELTON, U. S. A.

Self preservation, we are told, is the first law of nature. It is the excuse behind which every coward has lived to let a woman or a weaker man die. It is an excuse which every courageous man has scorned to use.

Every argument advanced favoring our control over the Philippines, we are told again, was used in defense of slavery, and is used now by every nation oppressing a weaker people. It may be true. But the use of an argument for a bad purpose does not prove the argument itself bad.

Our independence was established on the theory that the just powers of government are derived from the consent of the governed. But nowhere in our Declaration of Independence is it shown what shall constitute the "just powers" or what shall show "consent." We fought among ourselves later for four long years because of a difference of opinion in these respects. But regardless of this, we must believe, certainly, that our constitution was written by intelligent men as a platform upon which a courageous people could stand to do its share in the work of world progress. It was not written to be used as a bulwark behind which a cowardly people shirking its task in world affairs could hide.

Nations, which are but aggregations of men, have their work no less than men to perform. They may shirk their work no less than men. They may be cowardly or courageous no less than men. But no more than men can they hope to avoid the consequences of their cowardness or to avoid answering to history for their work left undone.

As a nation now we are responsible for the future of the Philippines and the Filipino people. But the Filipinos, we are told, wish to free us from the burden of this responsibility. President Schurman of Cornell University is reported recently to have said, among much else: "The people of the Philippine Islands have already unanimously and repeatedly expressed their desire for independence." If he is correctly reported, he must have spoken figuratively, for literally his statement cannot be true. But this is aside from my present purpose. He is quoted, further, as asking, "But can the Philippine Republic stand alone?" and of answering his own question to his own satisfaction apparently as follows: "The Filipinos who are the best judges of the matter think it can. If they are mistaken, the penalty falls on them, not on us." With all respect to the distinguished head of a great university, I take exception to both of these state-