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"For the Honor of the Race and the Good of the Country"

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

BY GERTRUDE BONNIN, ACTING EDITOR

THE Pierre, (S. D.) Conference is an accomplished fact. In these trying war times it was a privileged sacrifice to journey there.

Three of the S. A. I. officers absent are in military service. Arthur C. Parker, President, is on military duty "Somewhere in America"; John M. Oskison, First Vice-President, is serving "Somewhere in France"; Margaret Frazier, Vice-President on Membership, is a trained nurse in the Red Cross work at Camp Bowie, Texas.

The Honorary President, Rev. Sherman Coolidge, presided over the meetings.

The delegation of members though numerically small, was strikingly representative. There were gathered together in behalf of Indian welfare work—Arapahoe, Apache, Oklahoman, Ojibway, Ute, Pottowatomie, Sioux from different tribes and others.

It was gratifying and significant that in the face of the Conference dates having been designated for country fairs on all Indian reservations under Indian Bureau management, a successful conference was possible. Faithful Associate members crossed the continent to attend the American Indian Conference. Many new members were added to the rolls during the meeting.

The hospitality of the citizens of Pierre will ever be cherished in memory.

The spirit of a great united American brotherhood fighting in a common cause,—the defense of world democracy, pervaded the whole affair. American Indians are watching democracy, baptized in fire and blood overseas. They are watching the christening with mingled feelings of deepest concern,—the thing lies so close to their hearts it is difficult to give it expression. Indian soldiers lie dead on European battlefields, having intermingled their blood with that of every other race in the supreme sacrifice for an ideal.

Surely, the flaming shafts of light typifying political and legal

equality and justice,—government by the people, now penetrating the dark cloud of Europe are a continuous revelation. The light grows more effulgent, emanating as it does from the greatest of democracies,—America. The sunburst of democratic ideals cannot bring new hope and courage to the small peoples of the earth without reaching the remotest corners within America's own bounds.

Frank discussions are apt to call forth suppressed emotions of the American Indian but need not thereby create ruffled feelings. The Society of American Indians is compelled by the stress of the times to consider and discuss higher education for the Red Man and the rights of small peoples at its Annual Conference.

It is needful to thrash out the truth about Indian matters. Truth and justice are inseparable component parts of American ideals. As America has declared democracy abroad, so must we consistently practise it at home.

The American government is one where the voice of the people is heard. It is therefore not a radical step nor a presumption for the native Red Man today to raise his voice about the welfare of his race. The Red Man has been mute too long. He must speak for himself as no other can, nor should he be afraid to speak the truth and to insist upon a hearing for the utterance of truth can harm no one but must bless all mankind.

The future success of the Indian as a full-fledged American citizen depends largely upon what he does for himself today. If he is good enough to fight for American ideals he is good enough for American citizenship now.

Our Conference was honored by the presence of an Indian Bureau official, Mrs. Wilma R. Rhodes, Field Supervisor. This representative of our government repeatedly took the floor of the Conference to differ from the expressed opinions of the Indian members. These debates were marked with intense feeling. The difference seemed to be the natural result of a difference of viewpoint and interest.

The Indian Bureau system was naturally defended by its representative. The members of the Conference expressed a decided preference for Public Schools and American institutions. The Bureau representative advocated the alleged sweet oil of Government Schools under the Bureau System, while the Conference members protested against what they believed to be the fat fly of paternalism in this particular brand of ointment.

The Society of American Indians appreciates every true friend but were the organization to begin naming them it would be an undertaking. The great object and purpose of the Conference is to study the interest of the race as a whole and to devise means and methods for its practical advancement and the attainment of its rightful position among the peoples of the world.

INDIAN GIFTS TO CIVILIZED MAN*

BY GERTRUDE BONNIN (ZITKALA-SA)

CHANGING WOMAN, according to American Indian mythology, has once more rejuvenated herself. Out of old age she springs up in her former youthful beauty. In a royal robe of green, she adorns herself with gorgeous flowers. Changing Woman is the personification of the seasons.

This Indian Mother-Nature has ever been much adored by the red men. In turn she has loved her black-eyed children well. Many secrets she has told them in her secret bowers. Centuries of communion with her, in Indian gardens under primeval forests, have brought forth from insignificant plants, the acclimated and perfected corn and potato. Today they are important food for the people of the earth. They are a contribution from the Red Man of America. He does not crave any praise for the benefits we derive from his labors. It is for our own soul's good that we would give him due credit, at this acceptable time.

Food conservation of the hour is our immediate duty. Mr. Hoover clearly points out how we may very materially aid our allies in saving wheat for them by our own usage of more corn and potatoes. For a brief moment thought reverts to the red man who gave us his corn and potato. Our real appreciation may not find expression in words. We are so absorbed and busily engaged in urgent war activities. We have scarcely a minute to spare for anything else. Notwithstanding these circumstances, our gratitude to the Indian for these gifts is demonstrated by our vast fields, so eloquent in their abundant annual crops. Truly, these speak louder than words.

The patriotic farmer, planting his garden and his field, may wonder as he toils in the blistering sun what service, if any, the American Indian is giving to America in her defense of world democracy. The Red Man, citizen or non-citizen of our United States, is a loyal son of America. Five thousand Indian men are in our army. Some have already spilled their life blood in the trenches. Others have won military medals "Over There." Indian women are courageously knitting sweaters, helmets and socks for our brave soldiers. The Indian has subscribed about ten million dollars in Liberty Bonds.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Hon. Cato Sells, visiting four army camps in Texas, found 1,500 Indian soldiers there. Eighty-five per cent of this number are volunteers. Of the remaining fifteen per cent, some there are who did not claim their exemption, so eager were they to serve their country. Notwithstanding

* "July Indian Sentinel."

the difficulties that arise from the complicated system of classifying the government's wards, the Indian is in the front ranks of American patriotism. For absolute loyalty to the Stars and Stripes, the Indian has no peer.

It is especially gratifying that our great government did not segregate our Indian soldiers into Indian units, but permitted them to serve as Americans, shoulder to shoulder with their white brothers in khaki. Such a close companionship promises mutual benefits. The Indian is an adept at finding natural protection and hiding places. He inherits from his forefathers a wonderfully fine sense of direction which enables him to return to his starting point. Being thus so much at home in the out-of-doors, he may be an invaluable guide to our boys born and bred indoors. On the other hand, the Indian may learn much practical white man's knowledge from first hand experience; and, in their united struggle, will be gained a bond of sympathy that never was found in any book of learning.

The Indian race, once numbering about a million and a half has dwindled to about three hundred thousand. Yet in proportion to his numbers, he is unexcelled in his response to the country's call for fighting men. Were a patriotism like his to sweep through our entire population of millions, we would have in a day, an invincible army of twelve and a half million men. When we realize that the only future hope of the red man is in his educated, physically strong men, we marvel at his heroic response. This undaunted self-sacrifice of America's aboriginal son challenges your patriotism and mine. The sterling quality of his devotion to America is his most inspiring gift to the world. Well may we strive to cultivate in our hearts a better acquaintance with the Indian in our midst. He is just as worth while as the potato patch we are weeding and the cornfield we are plowing.

SECRETARY'S REPORT IN BRIEF.

Thousands of letters were issued from the office of the Secretary during the past two years. These letters went over-the-top of difficulties in the way of insufficient clerical assistance in the S. A. I. office owing to the great demand for clerks and stenographers in war activities, and the increased cost of mailing because of the higher postal rate. Letters are necessary to keep us in touch with our people on the various isolated reservations but the mere receiving and answering of letters, though a task in itself, is only the very beginning of the Society's real work in the Indian cause.

The Society of American Indians, by its activities, is in a position to give information about conditions now existing in Indian communities. Its duty is to convey its intimate knowledge of Indian matters to the American public for their information. The American people are interested since they are responsible for the final fulfillment of government treaties with Indians. They must be thoroughly informed to enable them to act justly, and impartially with all parties concerned. The Secretary continued her lectures throughout her term of office; and is glad to report that everywhere from coast to coast, she found large sympathetic audiences.

The American press has also responded to the special effort of the Society of American Indians to place items of Indian interest before the millions of readers. For this favor, we are most grateful to the editors and the writers upon Indian subjects.

The Pictorial Publicity Bureau of the government expressed a willingness to get out a poster depicting Indian patriotism in this war. It will be an invaluable source of encouragement to the Indians and a real enlightenment to that large part of our public that is ignorant of the real American in our midst. Public attention to the sterling patriotism of the Indians was invited by the first lady

* September 28, 1918.

of the land when Mrs. Woodrow Wilson gave Indian names to some of our new warships. It will be a fitting and appropriate act of the Pictorial Publicity Bureau to contribute a picture at this time portraying Indian heroism in the war for democracy.

With reference to the discontinuance of the Carlisle school, the Secretary read the following two letters:

September 6, 1918.

Hon. F. P. Keppell,
Third Assistant Secretary of War,
War Department, Washington, D. C.
My dear Mr. Keppell,

I have the honor, in behalf of a small body of Americans, to beg your forbearance in this request for a reconsideration of the non-continuance of the Carlisle Indian School. It is understood that the law of 1882 provides for the reversion of this property for military purposes.

Congress could not know thirty-six years ago that out of the old Carlisle barracks there was to stand today the Red Man's University. This fact bears directly upon Indian education and civilization to which our Government pledged itself in good faith. For the speedy fulfillment of this pledge the need is for more schools like Carlisle.

There must be a greater need for our Government to preserve, for purely economic reasons, the elaborately equipped machinery of the Carlisle School plant, for its honor bound obligation to educate the Indian. The transfer of Carlisle students to other Indian schools inferior schools (for Carlisle is leading all the other schools) does not make up to the race the loss of educational opportunities only Carlisle can give. This is a serious loss, in the face of the sad fact that approximately 20,000 Indian children eligible for schools are still without schools in our America.

Realizing that old laws are amended to meet the needs of new conditions; and that our constitution is amended from time to time, I humbly beg to suggest that a reconsideration of the Carlisle matter be made with a view to taking necessary steps by which some other Indian school plant less vital to Indian education be accepted in lieu of Carlisle for military purposes.

Very earnestly,
(Signed) GERTRUDE BONNIN,
Secretary.

September 16, 1918.

My dear Miss Bonnin:

I beg to acknowledge your letter of September 6th and regret that during this present emergency Carlisle Indian School may not be continued in its former capacity. As you are aware, every effort is being made to win the war in the shortest time and nearly every

institution in the country has been asked to contribute in a greater or less degree to this end.

I sincerely trust that this change will not work a hardship upon your people and that they will find in other institutions the goal towards which they are aiming.

Very sincerely,

(Signed) F. P. KEPPELL,

Third Assistant Secretary.

Miss Gertrude Bonnin,
Secretary, Society of American Indians,
Washington, D. C.

“In other institutions,” such as the public schools and American colleges, the American Indian must seek education. Under rules promulgated by the Hon. Secretary of the Interior, contracts are made with public schools for a few Indian students. This is truly a great stride in the right direction. *May it not be carried further by contracting with high schools and colleges for the education of American Indians?*

This war has emphasized in many ways the need of higher education for the Indians, and that the Indians themselves must make the effort upon their own initiative. They must have a voice in the manner in which their funds shall be used for their education and civilization.

In the olden days, the Indian hunter went forth in search of game that the family be fed and clothed. He did not sit in his tent waiting for some one to bring him food and raiment. Neither can the Indians today wait for some one else to bring to their door the indulgence of human rights. The Indians must go forth in search of the new game,—higher education, that they may enjoy equal rights with all American citizens.

In conclusion the Secretary reports that in the main the Society’s plan to work for those large principles which benefit the many has been adhered to, exceptions being made in the cases where those concerned appeared to be pitifully helpless and suffering in distress. Never a penny has been received for remuneration from those who received aid in the name of the Society of American Indians.