

THE PRESENT STATUS AND PROBABLE FUTURE OF THE INDIANS OF PUGET SOUND

The central fact to be observed in dealing with this problem is that the Indian of today is largely what the white man has made him. The relationship between the whites and the Indians in the past has done more than any other thing to bring about the present conditions of life among the Indians; and it is only as we understand this relationship of the past that we can fully grasp the present status and can catch a glimpse of the probable future or learn to apply remedies to eradicate existing evils. What progress the Indian has made, therefore, toward civilization can be traced directly to his relations with the whites, and similarly the evil conditions of life among a great number of our Indians can be traced to the same cause. It is, then, essential to take particular notice of some of these relations between the two races.

The Indians of Puget Sound were put on reservations by treaties concluded between them and Governor Isaac I. Stevens in the latter part of the fifties. These treaties established eighteen reservations, four in the Neah Bay agency, nine under the Puyallup consolidated agency and five under the Tulalip agency. The lands were set aside for the use of the Indian, to make a home for him, and to protect it from the encroachment of the whites. Under the federal act of July 4, 1884, the Indian was allowed to take advantage, without severing his tribal relations, of the Homestead Act of 1862. In 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act, or the so-called Dawes Act, which had for its purpose the breaking up of tribal life and establishing the Indians on private farms according to the customs of the whites. This is by far the most important piece of legislation enacted in the history of Indian affairs, because many complications have arisen under it. This law states, in part: "Every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States to whom allotment shall have been made under the provisions of this Act, or under any law or treaty, and every Indian born within the territorial limits of the United States, who has voluntarily taken up, within said limits, his residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians therein, and has adopted the habits of civilized life, is hereby declared to be a citizen of the United States and is entitled to all the rights, privileges and immunities of such citizens." (24 Stat. L. 390.)

It must be noted that this made such an Indian a citizen of the United States, but not necessarily a citizen of the state in which he resided. The

Constitution of the State of Washington declares that Indians not taxed shall not vote, and the penal code of the State makes it a felony to induce an Indian to vote—in spite of the fact that such class legislation and class restrictions are clearly not in harmony with the intentions of this federal law.

This Act has worked inestimable harm and has been one chief instrument of political and pecuniary graft through conferring citizenship under conditions which in no way required or evidenced the slightest fitness for citizenship. Charles M. Buchanan, Superintendent in charge of the Tulalip agency, said: "I know of instances where allotments have been made to an Indian without his application, without his knowledge, and without his desire—where in twenty-five years he has never set foot upon his alleged land, does not know where it is and does not want it. He is in possession of land that he does not want and a citizenship that he does not know, much less understand." It is difficult to attribute mere sympathy for the poor unprotected red man, as the only purpose for the enactment of such an ignorant, vicious piece of legislation. This Act, probably more than any other one thing, has determined the present-day status of our Puget Sound Indians.

Another complication which arose under this Dawes Act was the conflicting and antagonistic procedure on the part of local courts in regard to the transfer and sale of lands. Section 6 of that Act states that allotments shall be held in trust for a period of twenty-five years and the Indian allottees are to acquire citizenship at the time of the approval of such allotments. Also the inheritance or entail of allotments is made subject to the laws of descent and partition in the respective states where such allotments might be located. This provision, together with the Act of May 27, 1902 (32 Stat. L., 245), authorizing and providing for the sale of allotments of deceased allottees, has resulted in great confusion and conflicting procedure in local courts, thus making still more difficult the already complex administration of Indian affairs and impeding the progress of the Indian as a whole.

These developments of the vicious conditions arising under the Dawes Act pale into insignificance before the United States Supreme Court decision, "In the matter of Heff," 1905. This, famous or infamous, case arose in Kansas from the endeavor to enforce the federal law of 1897 relating to the sale of liquor to the Indians. A man named Heff, in Kansas, was arrested, tried and convicted for selling two quarts of beer to an Indian. He was sentenced to a fine and to a term in jail. He had the case appealed to the United States Supreme Court, and that body decided that if, under the Dawes Act of 1887, an Indian becomes a citizen of the

United States, he is entitled to all the rights, privileges and immunities pertaining to such citizenship, and hence to acquire and consume liquor at pleasure. Therefore, to that extent the prohibitory provisions of the Act of 1897, affecting such privileges, were declared to be null and void, and Heff was ordered to be released. This has been the most vicious piece of legislation in the history of Indian affairs. The worst enemy of the Indian is his overpowering love for liquor. Congress has attempted again and again to protect him from this weakness, and in the Act of 1897 it was thought that this trouble was at an end with the enacting of such an ironclad law. It practically prohibited the furnishing of liquor in any form, in any place, and under any pretense to an Indian. The year following the Heff decision saw an increase of the liquor traffic among the Indians of Puget Sound undreamed of before. It spelled almost absolute ruin and prostration for the Puyallup Indians. Other agencies report a similar striking increase in the amount of drunkenness, crime, and death, and a marked lowering of moral standards and civilization. Even some of the more intelligent men of the Tulalip tribes express their sorrow over the Heff decision and its results.

On May 8, 1906, Congress attempted to remedy these evil conditions arising under the Dawes Act by passing the Burke Act. This amends the Dawes Act to read, "At the expiration of the trust period and when the lands have been conveyed to the Indians by patent in fee, as provided in Section five of this act, then each and every allottee shall have the benefit of and be subject to the laws, both civil and criminal, of the state or territory in which they may reside; Provided, that the Secretary of the Interior, may, in his discretion, and he is hereby authorized, whenever he shall be satisfied that any Indian allottee is competent and capable of managing his or her affairs at any time to cause to be issued to such allottee a patent in fee simple, and thereafter all restrictions as to sale, incumbrance, or taxation of said land shall be removed and said land shall not be liable to the satisfaction of any debt contracted prior to the issuing of such patent." (34 Stat. L. 182). This postpones the acquisition of citizenship until the termination (instead of the initiation) of the trust period. This can, however, only apply to such allotments as have been made, or shall be made, subsequent to May 8, 1906. It cannot undo the evils resulting from the past.

It would be sad indeed if this were the only aspect of the Indian question. There is, however, a brighter side. Great progress has been made in civilization through contact with the whites. The simple, primitive, uneducated child of Nature is a thing of the past. The Puget Sound Indian of today has discarded many of his tribal customs and habits

and adopted those of the whites. Reservation reports show that nearly all have adopted the white man's dress, can speak the English language more or less, and have adopted a great many American customs, manners of living, and institutions. The occupations of the men are practically the same as those of the whites. They engage in fishing, truck gardening, stock raising, and some work in the logging camps, lumber mills, and hop fields. They are, however, as a rule, extremely shiftless, preferring to sell their land outright and get the money rather than to clear it and make it their home. Each year, however, a few more homes are made. These are quite like those found among the whites of a similar social status.

One of the big obstacles with which the Puget Sound Indian is contending at the present time is found in the conditions of the fishing industry. Owing to the very rapid increase in importance of this industry, through the use of traps, together with concentration of capital and consolidation of the canning plants, the salmon fisheries, which are the chief means of subsistence of the coast Indians, are being rapidly monopolized. The means of obtaining a living are, therefore, becoming daily more precarious, particularly among the older Indians. The stock of fish is being depleted so rapidly that there is an increasing demand for more and larger hatcheries. The white man, with superior intelligence and more capital, is gradually crowding the unfortunate Indian out of his time-honored occupation. The same thing may be said in regard to the logging industry. The ignorant Indian, without capital, cannot compete successfully with the superior intelligence and greater wealth of his white neighbor. This makes the matter of employment and subsistence extremely precarious and forms one of the biggest problems that confronts us today in regard to Indian affairs.

Perhaps one of the best and most hopeful signs of progress is the growing interest and rapid improvement in education. Each of the Indian reservations is provided with one or more day schools and the Puyallup and Tulalip agencies have industrial training schools. These latter especially are doing very efficient and creditable work. They are fitting the new generation of Indians for a life of usefulness. Very few of the older generations can be induced to clear and farm their lands, but the time has now come when this is the only practicable thing for them to do and so the purpose of the schools should be to fit the rising generation for a life occupation. These two industrial schools are meeting this task very efficiently. The Tulalip school ground was cleared mostly by the pupils themselves. Recently the Government has provided them with a donkey engine. A large plot of ground is set out to fruit and vegetables. A sufficient amount of garden products is produced on this to supply the

entire school, and besides a large amount is sold. At the same time, valuable instruction is given to the boys in fruit raising and truck growing. In 1908 a large mill and manual training building were erected entirely by school help. Pupil self-government is used in connection with the discipline of the school. The officers include mayor, city clerk, city council, health officer, policeman and judges. The system seems to be capably managed and good results are produced.

The day schools are experiencing a great deal more difficulty. The allotments are so far apart that there are, necessarily, but few families close to the schools. The remainder of the children are compelled to come a long way. This, together with the bad, rainy climate of Puget Sound, makes the enforcement of attendance at day schools a very difficult problem. These factors make the attendance uncertain and irregular, and when the pupils do go they are often compelled to sit all day long with wet clothing. Such conditions are enough to break down the strongest constitutions. What wonder is it, then, that the death rate is high among the Indian children, who are often poorly fed, poorly clad and already predisposed. Then, too, to be efficiently administered these schools require a strong, capable, well-trained teacher, one imbued with the true missionary spirit. Such teachers are not, as a rule, found in the Indian service, and the salaries are not usually large enough to attract them into the service from outside. On the whole, however, it must be said that progress in the right direction is slowly being accomplished. Better teachers and a larger number of well-equipped schools are being supplied.

In a great many cases, it is a difficult undertaking to influence the older people to change their customs and habits, although the rising generation do so very readily. Some progress can be noted among the old people, however. For example, over three-fourths of the families on the Lummi reservation use the English language exclusively at home, and in a great many cases the children can speak nothing but English. The Indians have given up a great many of their forms and ceremonies and superstitions. Marriage is now performed according to the customs of the whites. Licenses are obtained usually from the county officials, seldom from the agency. Each reservation has individual courts of Indian offenses, officered and administered by Indians. These, on the whole, have done very careful, conscientious and helpful work, not only in the administration of justice, but in maintaining law and order and peaceably adjusting quarrels and disputes.

The morals of the Indians of Puget Sound are as good as could reasonably be expected when we take into consideration our ignorant, un-

wholesome legislation and the fact that, as a race, laxness in this respect has been only too common. Contact with the lower class of whites has unfortunately resulted in the copying of a great many of their vices, as well as virtues. Some progress can be noted, however. They are observing the marriage tie with much more faithfulness than formerly, and where man and wife are not living together, they are divorced by due process of law.

The Heff decision has undoubtedly done much toward sending the Indian down to destruction. Since then it has been almost impossible to keep drink and the Indians apart. The Puyallup Indians have nearly all passed the trust period and become citizens, as, in fact, have a good many on the other reservations. Since that time they have lost their property, self-respect, and health to a large degree. The only thing they haven't been able to get rid of is their citizenship, which has been largely responsible for their present condition. Superintendent Buchanan reports in 1907, in speaking of the enforcement of our state laws in regard to liquor selling, "In thirteen years of life in this vicinity I have yet to see or hear of the first case of actual enforcement of any of these provisions. In six years of very vigorous prosecution I have secured remarkably few convictions in such cases, and these only on pleas of guilty, and in all of which the minimum penalty was inflicted. Indeed, the situation is so very extraordinary that one is not always sure of a conviction even when the defendant admits his guilt and pleads guilty. In one such case, which went before the federal grand jury on such a plea of guilt, the jury, with all the facts before them, and with the defendant admitting guilt and pointing out and identifying the confiscated bottles and flasks, turned the prisoner loose as innocent, even though he insisted that he was guilty. This very extraordinary event occurred in Seattle before the May, 1905, session of the Federal Grand Jury." (Page 58, Report of Indian Agents and Superintendents to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1907.) Is it any wonder, then, that liquor dealers violate the law with impunity when it is such a difficult matter to secure conviction?

In 1909, the State of Washington passed a very stringent law relating to the selling of liquor to Indians and since that time, enforcement has been somewhat stricter. This makes it a felony for anyone to sell liquor in any form, at any time, and under any pretense, to an Indian, to whom allotment has been made, while the title is held in the trust period, or to an Indian who is held under guardianship of an Indian agent or superintendent, or under the charge of the United States. This law is **being much more rigidly enforced** than has hitherto been the case, yet the

Indians still get the liquor. Saloon keepers in towns bordering on the reservations are wary about selling it to them, but in towns some distance from the reservations open selling still goes on. On the whole, our liquor laws are more honored in the breach than the observance.

The consumption of such a large amount of liquor in the past has, in a great many cases, absolutely destroyed the health of the Indians. Their constitutions always have been weak, subject to tuberculosis, pneumonia, and all pulmonary diseases, and when the consumption of large amounts of alcohol is added to this, little wonder is it that the death rate is high among them, and that so many weak, diseased Indian children come into the world.

In the matter of religion, the Puget Sound Indians are in an evolutionary stage. On the whole, the old form of religion, called Tamah-nous, in which the evil spirit was worshipped in order to appease it, and hence not to be visited by it, has been replaced by the Christian religion, or by a mixture of the Christian and the old. The Puget Sound Indians are peculiar in one respect, viz: that they are indolent and lazy, are easily persuaded to accept and follow any belief, but are usually unwilling to make an effort to think or reason out a question. They are indolently and willingly superficial. The result of this has been that while a great many have been converted to the Christian religion, still that conversion has been very superficial in character. They have been satisfied with the content that external forms and actions would make them right with God, and secure to them a future happiness, and, at the same time, have utterly disregarded the true inner spirit of religion. Hence, they have readily taken up anything that appeals to the sensuous in their religious nature.

In 1882 or 1883, a Mud Bay Indian, named John Slocum, who had been converted to Catholicism, but who had led a rather desultory life, fell sick and apparently died. The usual death ceremonies took place, but to the great surprise of the Indians, Slocum came to life again on the second or third day after his death. He brought with him a wonderful tale. He affirmed that he had indeed died, gone up to the pearly gates and there met St. Peter, who refused him entrance on the grounds that he had led too loose a life. There was one way, however, so St. Peter informed him, by which he could yet earn his way into Paradise, and that was to go back to earth and teach his fellow Indians a new form of religion, which was to be the same as that in the white man's book, but better adapted to the needs of the Indians. Hence his return to life.

Slocum immediately began to preach his new doctrine, a religion since named "Shakerism," which has gathered together at least half of

the Indians of Puget Sound, who profess any religion at all. This is a curious mixture of the old Tamahnous religion and Protestantism and Catholicism. It is undoubtedly a decided step in advance of the old religion, since it enjoins a worship of an all-powerful, good God rather than malicious devils and evil spirits. The beliefs and ceremonies differ among different tribes, and are more nearly in harmony with the Christian religion where the missionaries have had the most influence. The influence of Catholicism is to be seen in the elaborate forms and ceremonies of worship and the cross and candle sticks on the altar. Those afflicted with a guilty conscience remain on their knees during the entire Sunday service, crossing themselves repeatedly. The songs and prayers are translations into Indian or Chinook done by the early missionaries.

The retained features of the old Tamahnous religion are to be seen largely in the conversion ceremonies and the healing of the sick—the so-called “Night Work.” It is difficult for the Indians to give up their old superstitions and barbaric rites. These still remain in their minds and crop out with the more modern beliefs in their religion. To quote from an article by Edwin L. Chalcraft, a teacher in one of the Indian schools, “Every act tends to excitement. The wierd Indian chant, the dance music, the frenzied dances, the ringing of hand bells and the rubbing of the patient’s body to drive out sickness or the evil spirit, as the case may be, and let in the new religion, all have a place, and are sometimes continued through the night, or until the participants become exhausted.”

The introduction of this new belief among the Indians worked havoc in the churches. From the first the new religion gained a large number of converts at the expense of the Christian institution. A great many of the Christian churches have had to close their doors and go out of business, because of this keen competition. Especially among the Puyallup reservation tribes is this true. This religion has taken such a firm hold upon them that Christianity is making no progress at all at the present time. For thirty-five years, up to 1901, Rev. Myron Eells worked faithfully and perseveringly among them against innumerable obstacles, but since his death in that year the work has almost ceased. The Neah Bay agency is supplied with one Presbyterian mission, but it is struggling along, fearing to have to go out of business every day. The missionary work of the Tulalip agency is done entirely by the Catholic church, and on the whole very good results have been accomplished. Most of the reservations have churches of their own, and the priests of neighboring towns minister to their welfare. Shakerism has a very weak hold among them.

Taken altogether, this religion has had its place in helping the Indians live better lives, especially where the Bible has been faithfully taught.

Where the old Tamahnous still bears sway, and the old superstitions are still current, however, the effect has been noticeably bad, showing itself principally in unfaithfulness in the family life. As C. L. Woods, Superintendent of the Neah Bay agency, says, "The Shakers, a peculiar religious sect, are seemingly doing good, as there has been little or no law breaking by their members, and no drunkenness whatever. Their professed creed is a model of orthodoxy, and it would be bigotry to oppose their outlandish and queer manner of worship."

I think it can be safely assumed that at least assimilation, if not race fusion, between the Puget Sound Indians and the whites will take place some time not very far distant. The younger generation of Indians are showing a very marked capability of taking over our habits, customs, institutions and manner of living. Nearly all can speak and read the English language, a good many cannot speak their native tongue. They come in contact with the white children a great deal and so copy from them their games and amusements, and ultimately their ideals and ways of doing things. This is one of the most hopeful signs for the future of the race. If we can keep the Indian children interested in their school work and keep them in contact with the white children, assimilation will quickly be brought about. The closer the contact with the better class of whites, the sooner will the Indians reach our plane of civilization, and the easier will become assimilation and fusion. Already there is quite a noticeable drift away from the reservations, and I believe the time will come, and not very long distant, when the reservations will be done away with entirely. Assimilation will go on more easily and more rapidly because of the relatively small number of Indians. There are but something less than four thousand reservation Indians at the present time around Puget Sound, and statistics show that they are just about holding their own in numbers. If any change at all, there may be a slight natural increase in population.

In early pioneer days, intermarriage of the whites and Indians was very common and no especial social stigma was attached to it; at the present time, however, intermarriage is commonly discountenanced, especially among the better classes of whites and somewhat of a social degradation goes with it. Young married couples of the Indians usually leave the reservations and go out among the whites to live. Often, however, they return to their reservations because of the poor social standing they receive among the whites, and because they long to be with their kinsmen.

On the part of the whites, two things must be insisted upon, first, a stricter enforcement of our liquor laws, and, second, a more friendly and

helpful attitude toward the Indian. We have robbed the Indian of his lands and waters by false and fair means; we have forced him to live in an atmosphere of totally different customs and ideals; it would be, therefore, far less than justice if we fail to do all we can to help him fit himself for his new life.

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