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## New Policies in Indian Education

By JOHN COLLIER

INSTEAD of trying to furnish a comprehensive review of the Indian schooling situation, I believe it will be more useful to state a few of the controlling facts and considerations of policy.

### *Indian Service Money*

The Indian Service is working within a reduced budget—cut \$12,500,000 from the fiscal year 1931 to the fiscal year 1933. The regular budget for the fiscal year 1934 can probably not exceed that for 1933.

Yet the Indian is not adequately served. The deficiencies are extreme. The health service remains very inadequate, quantitatively speaking, and, on the whole, below par qualitatively. The means for the relief of distress and for the care of the aged and infirm are grossly insufficient. The devising and financing of a modern credit system for Indians is still in the future. Indians to the number of 100,000 are wholly or virtually landless; and 7,000,000 acres of land belonging to deceased Indian allottees are awaiting disposal to whites. Between 12,000 and 15,000 children are denied schooling opportunity.

Even were all of the needed capital investment in behalf of the Indians to be provided outside of the budget appropriation, still there would be a deficiency of services:

And still it remains true that the per capita expenditure for Indian service is disagreeably large.

The solution must be found through the redistribution of expenditures within the diminished budget. This fact, among others more prominent and humanly more interesting, drives the Indian Service toward the substitution of day schools for boarding schools.

A day school costs, on a liberal basis, \$125.00 a year per pupil. A boarding school costs, on a niggardly basis, \$360.00 per year per pupil. If the unschooled Indians are

to be schooled, and if funds are to be released for urgent and neglected health work and other needs, the substitution of day schools for boarding schools must go ahead and must, if possible, be expedited.

We are now expending \$1,500,000 of Public Works money for the construction of day schools, mostly in Arizona and New Mexico. These day schools should accommodate 4,500 children, approximately. The fiscal result is interesting. To school in day schools, rather than in boarding schools, 4,500 children, means a net saving of about \$1,060,000 a year continuously. The capital investment is liquidated in a year and a half.

There remain in boarding schools more than 18,000 Indian children. If the number be reduced by 10,000, the total of appropriation which can be released for other uses can be computed by any interested reader.

### *The Social Policy Which Ought to Control the School Policy*

For purposes of simplification, what follows is limited to the southwestern area of the Indian country.

The Indians are largely pure bloods. Their cultural heritage has not yet become a mere folk-lore. It is, on the contrary, organic, institutional; psychically, socially and industrially, it is a dynamic reality.

To the Indians themselves, and to civilization, this cultural heritage is of fundamental, urgent importance. Its potentialities, in the way of future development, can only be speculated about. Personally, I am convinced that these potentialities are, or might be made, intense and profound—exciting to the lover of life and the explorer of the human spirit. But this, which might seem the romantic view, need not be insisted on. The moral and industrial “values” of the Pueblo and Navajo heritage are acknowledged by all.

One common error must be rebutted. It is the error of believing that a choice must be made between the archaic

and the contemporary. History makes no such choice. The contemporary, psychologically speaking, is nothing but an adjustment carried out by the archaic. The archaic outlives the contemporary, age by age. Many cross-fertilizations, many evolutions have brought the Pueblos to their present moment. Navajo industry has been revolutionized within the past seventy years. The "archaic" has been adjusting to the contemporary all the time.

Indian policy must rest on a detailed and affirmative recognition of what is implied above. Indian policy cannot substitute a newly decreed life or way of life for that which exists. It can only help the existing life to make its own career.

Actually we still are, in the main, although unconsciously, trying to decree Indian life out of our own values and habits.

And we are continuing to bring to bear on Indian education that false assumption which we have so disastrously applied to our own education, namely, *the omnipotence of the school*. The school is not omnipotent. Divorced from the community, the school is in fact largely impotent. And this impotence may be a saving grace, so long as the school remains, on its part, unillumined by the real life, i.e., the community life.

Reduced to a practical statement, the remarks here ventured would mean:

The Indian schools should primarily be designed to discover Indian life, and to discover to that Indian life its own unrealized needs and opportunities.

If such a formula be adopted, are our Indian schools, as now conducted, to be considered successful or unsuccessful?

### *The Problem the Indians are Facing*

It is the use of their land in such a manner as to conserve and improve their land; the acquisition of more land; the use of inherited and native traditions and talents for

economic betterment and for the enrichment of personal and communal life; and the raising of the material standard of living without a corresponding disintegration of those social and psychic achievements which are, in the case of the Navajos and Pueblos, beacons to a distressed world.

These tribes as communities, and their individual members, must become effectually conscious of a wide range of facts which, as yet, they are only slightly aware of. I refer, for example, to hygienic facts. Again, to the facts having to do with purchase and market. Again, to the facts having to do with the wastage of land through erosion. Again, to the facts having to do with financial credit. Again, to the facts as to the relation between populations and areas of land.

This widening awareness of their own practical life must come about not through preachments but through successive actions. Thought, even in the experience of highly individualized Aryans, moves only a little way ahead of action. And thought, among peoples still living the ethnic life, moves only as action moves. Hence, what may be called the social education of the Indian tribes must be pursued through enterprise, and in most cases the school should be the center of this enterprise or a leading partner in it.

Yet here, a different peril thrusts itself into attention.

I have said of our schools (for whites and Indians alike; our schools as they are, not as they might be) that it may be a saving grace that they are comparatively powerless, because were they powerful, they might sunder their pupils from the realities of life.

But if our schools (here, I refer to our Indian schools only) are to become social promotion agencies, and if they promote not wisely but too well, there may ensue a disruption—a veritable slaughter—of the anthropological and communal values of Indian life.

There is, between the archaic and the modern, no *nec-*

*essary* conflict. But between Indian life and a too-uplifting and too-naive community reform effort by community schools, there might be a devastating conflict.

Wisdom, knowledge and a right instinct would be our safeguard. How can we achieve these far ideals—wisdom, knowledge and a right instinct?

*A Suggestion from Mexico*

Mexico, not too ambitious for booklearning among her Indians, and financially poor as Mexico is, struck out on a new line ten years ago. Young men and women were brought, in local normal schools, into contact with the best scientific and esthetic minds of the Republic.

These young men and women, after two or three years in the normal schools which themselves were Indian communities, returned to their own people and became the teachers. In these Mexican schools, the teaching for children and for adults and the community enterprise for and with the whole population are part of one activity; and the school's efficiency is measured by its social productiveness, not by the scholastic grades which its students achieve.

Thus, in these Mexican schools the wisdom of the folk and the right instinct of the folk are fertilized and somewhat guided by first-rate sociological, anthropological and esthetic minds of cosmopolitan background. In turn, they restrain the zeal of the innovators.

Can we hope, in our Indian Service, for the freedom to make a similar endeavor? Is there any reason why it should not be successful?

I believe that our hope in Indian education, for the southwestern area at least, is to be fulfilled on this line if at all.