



TIGHT SHOE NIGHT

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The author's conviction perhaps makes the paper which follows less a scholarly article than a primary source, a document, if you will, of the attitudes of a devoted worker in the field. I have chosen to include it not in spite of its editorializing, but partially because of it, and partially because it contains an impressively authoritative survey of conditions in one of the most important -- and difficult to understand -- centers of Indian population and culture.

-- SGL

Saturday night was "Tight Shoe Night" for country people, a time to dress up in "store bought'n clothes," and head for town. For the central and western Oklahoma Indians Tight Shoe Night began when they arrived at government boarding schools, and the freedom of moccasins gave way to the rigidity of stiff government shoes.

Today, Tight Shoe Night in central and western Oklahoma is not confined to Saturday night. The Cleopatra make-up, the bouffant hair style and the Jacqueline Kennedy voice are necessities to young Indian women as the button-down collar, the striped tie, the four-button jacket and tight-fitting trousers are badges of achievement for young Indian men. The Indians, in short, like their non-Indian neighbors, are conditioned by television, style magazines and the "image" of the corporation man.

Who are these modern Indians? "The Congress has not given a general definition by legislation nor have the Courts by interpretation."¹ Identification, therefore, rests with each group, to be defined in its tribal constitution.

This paper will be concerned with individuals who possess one-quarter or more of Indian blood, and who belong to the following tribes: Arapaho, Caddo, Cheyenne, Comanche, Delaware, Iowa, Kaw, Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Omaha, Osage, Oto, Quapaw, Pawnee, Ponca, Pottawatomie, Sac-Fox, Shawnee and Wichita.

The problems the paper will treat will be: the general organization of Indian society in central and western Oklahoma, the interrelations

between urban and rural persons, the position of young people and the checks and balances which make Indian life a cultural continuum. The general situation will be viewed without considering the individual exceptions which do exist.

The Indian population in Oklahoma City is between 12,000 and 16,000. Oklahoma City, the largest metropolitan community in the state, was created on unassigned lands. The city had no native Indian inhabitants at the time the land was opened for settlement. Oklahoma City is not designated as a relocation center by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Therefore, Oklahoma City offers the best available example of self-relocated contemporary Indian life, and serves as the urban focus for this study.

Oklahoma has an Indian population of 64,000 (U.S. Census 1960), but claims only one legal reservation, that of the Osage (Osage County). This reservation has none of the colloquial connotations of Indian reservations in other states, because it includes some of the richest lands and individuals within the state of Oklahoma.

There are other Indian tribes of Oklahoma which have no reservations. They live scattered among the non-Indian population, in both rural areas and urban centers. Lack of reservation lands puts central and western Oklahoma Indians in a precarious position with relation to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and to the city, county and state governments. The eternal question is, who will be responsible for aiding the Indian? At present it is a question in flux. The answer in the long run will inevitably be the Indian.

Electricity in the rural areas, increased telephone service and super highways have made the "country cousin" a symbol of the past. Tight Shoe Night for the Indians is everywhere. Friends and relatives from the urban centers visit the rural areas for family gatherings, tribal activities, religious functions and just for the pleasure of returning home. Rural Indians come to Oklahoma City for socializing, seasonal jobs, specialized medical treatment, education, shopping and just for the pleasure of being in the big city.

Rural Indians live either on inherited or allotted land, or in small towns. Land sales, heirship cases and tenant farming have resulted in non-Indian people living scattered throughout what were formerly Indian lands. There are in Oklahoma towns like Anadarko or Pawnee, which are considered by the Indians to be Indian towns because the tradespeople cater to Indian needs. The stores stock shawls, Pendleton blankets, beads and so forth. Indian towns are usually places that have some government offices, and where the Indian people have become accustomed to visit on business and errands. Non-Indian towns are those that offer no special inducement to the Indians. However, no Oklahoma community is without Indians, and in no Oklahoma community do Indians live in any special section of town.²

RURAL AND URBAN INDIANS

Rural Indian communities have more old people and more children than urban communities. The old folks like to stay at home where they grew up and earned their livings. The children in rural houses often are grandchildren, either biologically or by traditional kinship, who have been given to or left with the older people. The young adults and middle-aged individuals who remain in the rural areas work for the Federal government, have private businesses or farms, are employed by the state, or are those people who "just can't make it."

Indians living in urban centers are spread throughout the non-Indian population. There are, however, very few Indian people living in predominantly Negro neighborhoods. In Oklahoma City there are certain sections of town which are more desirable to the Indians than other sections, but there is no Indian neighborhood as such.

The urban Indians range from middle-aged people to veterans or wives of veterans of World War II or of the Korean War, and either own no land in the home rural area or share in small portions of heirship lands. Many young married people are also present in the urban Indian community. They usually are individuals who came to the city with their parents, and have remained for reasons of employment and attachment.

The organization of Indian society in rural and urban communities is the same. Indian society, now as in the past, has many checks and balances. Factions interact to create Indian culture. This is not a pan-Indian culture. Tribal identification remains the predominant theme of Indian society. Ethnic personalities are very pronounced, despite intertribal marriages, intertribal activities and relocation.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS

After tribal identification, the rural and urban Indian communities make a distinction between "Christian" and "non-Christian" Indians. Each group, of course, feels superior to the other. Objectively, the Indians belonging to Christian faiths with international scope and more centralized leadership are those individuals who will obtain the highest objectives in the non-Indian world.

The Christian Indians belong to the Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Mennonite, Mormon, Nazarene and other Christian faiths. Tribal groups reflect the proselytizing of the early missionaries. The Methodist and Baptist faiths are strongest in central and western Oklahoma among the Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Comanche, Sac-Fox and other groups; their mission activities began in the 1850's and have continued to the present. The Catholic faith is strong among the Osage, Ponca, Kaw and related north-central groups. The Mennonites are found among the Arapaho and Cheyenne, where German immigrants settled in clusters at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Methodists and Baptists maintain Indian mission churches in the greater Oklahoma City area, and in rural areas throughout the state. These churches can, and often do, give service to the non-Indian community. The ministers, in most cases, will be of Indian descent. Both faiths have a separate "conference" for the Indians. Each conference sets the standards for its ministers, and for their interpretation and presentation of the faith in question. These Indian conferences have different educational standards for the ministry from those observed in non-Indian conferences. Thus, Indian ministers in these faiths usually have much less formal education than ministers serving churches in educated white communities, or in some Oklahoma City Negro churches.

There is great rivalry between the Methodist and Baptist churches in central and western Oklahoma. The Methodists consider themselves the more liberal of the two faiths. Each considers itself the more influential in the social fields, and both look down on other faiths, both Christian and non-Christian. There is no cooperation between the two churches, or between these churches and other Christian or non-Christian beliefs. Dogmatic religion rather than Christian tolerance is the rule in their preaching.

The same conditions are present in Christian churches now that were noted nearly forty years ago in the Merriam Report:

The outstanding need in the field of missionary activities among the Indians is cooperation. Cooperation is needed both in the relationships between the government and the missionaries and in the relationship among the churches and the missionaries themselves. Positive action looking toward improvement, therefore, must take the direction of improving the mechanism through which cooperation can be effective.

Unless funds are available satisfactorily to maintain all stations in operation, the question should be raised as to whether more effective results could not be secured through concentration of the resources on a smaller number of stations.

The missionaries should consider carefully a material broadening of their program and an increase in the number and kinds of contacts with the Indians. Their best work has usually been in the field of education. For adult Indians their main offering has been church activities similar to those conducted in white communities, and those activities apparently make little appeal to the Indians. [In 1964 these activities have more appeal.] The missionaries need to have a better understanding of the Indian point of view of the Indian's religion and ethics, in order to start from what is good in them as a foundation. Too frequently,

they have made the mistake of attempting to destroy the existing structure and to substitute something else without apparently realizing that much in the old has its place in the new.³

The non-Christian Indians are those individuals who practice the old native religions, or are members of the Native American Church. The inclusion of the Native American Church in this category is an Indian colloquial classification, which shows the attitude of the Christian Indians towards the Peyote religion. Objectively, the Native American Church should be included as a Christian belief.⁴

All non-Christian Indians have had some training in Christian ideology. Most Indians in central and western Oklahoma have been exposed to the Baptist and Methodist faiths, and the concepts of these churches furnish the Christian foundation for the teachings of the Native American Church. Similarly, the Osage and neighboring tribes use Catholic teachings as the Christian concepts basic to their Native American Church services.

The non-Christian Indians generally are more conservative about tribal traditions than are Christian Indians, and they usually represent conservative factions within their own tribes. In Oklahoma City they are the people who have the greatest struggle in adjustment to new conditions because they have no place in which to center their social life. They often belong to the lower income group, have less education and fewer skills than the Christian Indians. Generally, they look for and find employment, and are industrious, but they are handicapped by functional illiteracy and consequent difficulty in communication with employers and others outside their own group. They tend to help each other and to support at least the social activities of most Indian Christian Churches.

Christian and non-Christian Indians vacillate in their religious thinking. Many individuals profess Christianity but in reality cling to their native beliefs. There are others who experiment with religious concepts, and still others who cling dogmatically to their belief, whether Christian or non-Christian, as the only means of keeping sanity in a complex world.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Education, employment and income create other strata in the urban-rural social structure. These strata will dominate the religious stratum in some situations.

Education, employment and income usually go hand in hand, although this depends upon the kind of employment and the wage scale it pays. Oklahoma has, within the past year, legally accepted union shops which will result in wage increases for certain kinds of work. Until now, the white collar worker has held the more advantageous social position. Economic advances within the jobs previously considered socially inferior may change the strata of Indian society, as union jobs pay union wages.

Most Indians over forty-five years of age in central and western Oklahoma have been educated in some type of government school. There is, however, great variation in the quality of education among government schools, and the time period when such an education was received. Government policies, teacher training and school facilities all have left deep marks on Indian adults. Those under the age of forty-five years, in contrast, have usually attended a public educational institution. Today, except in unusual cases, all Indian children attend public primary and secondary schools. But among all the Indians at all age levels there is a high rate of functional illiteracy. The causes for this condition require intensive study in order that corrective measures be developed and applied.

College and specialized education seem to be more readily achieved by members of some tribes than by members of others. The reasons for this may be in the ethnic personalities involved, and in tribal or individual readiness to accept acculturation.

There is little doubt that all groups considered in this paper have always had class-structured societies. Structure varied from tribe to tribe and was more pronounced in some tribes than in others. Persons occupying honored positions -- band chiefs, war chiefs, medicine men, priests, drum keepers, makers of songs -- have continued to exist within extended family groups for many generations. It is in this upper class of Indian society that educated Indians will be found today, and from this upper class will doubtless come the future leaders and administrators of Indian culture.

The educational aspirations of the present primary and secondary school youngsters remain in harmony with the old class structure. Children born into upper-class Indian families anticipate college educations, terminating in advanced degrees. Children from the middle classes of Indian society usually anticipate training in skilled jobs. Those from the lower economic and social strata have little to anticipate. Naturally, the economic positions of the family and the home environment will influence the educational ambitions of the children. Poverty and ignorance, for the Indian and the non-Indian, go hand in hand from generation to generation.

A recent trend among Indian parents in the urban centers is to examine their children's aptitude for college. This trend has resulted from the efforts of counselors in public schools. Literature available to Indian parents, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs, stresses scholarships for college students, rather than funds for those who enter vocational schools. This may be due to the greater availability of funds for higher education.

Rural and urban Indian children frequently drop out of secondary school. Some parents are able to persuade their children to return, while others are not so lucky. Frank Moore, Director of the Legislative Study Committee for the Oklahoma Mental Health Planning Commission, said, "Statewide, we had 23.6 dropouts per 100 ninth-grade pupils." Moore's report also showed that 1 child in 7 had some kind of emotional or physical handicap.⁵

The newspaper account of the report did not show a break-down of the distribution of handicapped children among minority groups. If one considers the general health of the parents of Indian children, it becomes a certainty that a large percentage of Indian children must fall into the classification of handicapped. Tuberculosis, diabetes, obesity and coronary disorders are present today in every Indian family in central and western Oklahoma.

Many Indians desire adult education. The principal problem of obtaining adult education in Oklahoma lies in the policy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Bureau has not considered any Oklahoma metropolitan area of sufficient size to qualify as a relocation center. Individuals wanting to learn such skills as cosmetology, typing or electronics go to Denver, Dallas or Los Angeles. But most Indians do not want to leave their friends, families and homes. Since Oklahoma Indians do not live on reservations, they cannot understand the attitude of the Bureau. "That's all right for them reservation Indians but not for us." Often an Indian tries to earn his own school expenses, or applies for a tribal scholarship, but most often these ambitious people give up in despair.

Oklahoma City's capital funds for economic growth have tripled since 1951, reaching over \$3 million in 1963. Oklahoma City's percentage of unemployment has risen slightly in the same period, but remains very low in terms of the national average, and no time has been lost through labor disputes. The Help-Wanted Index of the National Industrial Conference Board places Oklahoma City in ninth position nationally, just below Dallas and above Denver and Los Angeles.⁶ The local telephone directory for 1964 lists 14 business colleges, 9 schools of cosmetology and 4 schools for electronics in Oklahoma City. One cannot help but wonder, therefore, about the basis for the decisions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Opportunities open to Indians in the President's War on Poverty do not seem to have been adequately utilized. These programs apparently suffer from poor communication between the local, state and federal personnel and the Indians. Many Indians do not possess the basic skills or the command of English required for the more advanced training being offered under the program at this time. Many other reasons for the failure of Indians to participate in new programs exist, and a careful study of the situation would have to be made before any conclusions could be reached.

Employment creates another type of social stratum which sometimes transcends tribal, religious and social groups. The largest employers of Indians in Oklahoma are the various civilian and military branches of the federal government, including Fort Sill, Lawton; Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma City; the Federal Aviation Administration; the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which employs agency, educational and administrative personnel; and the Division of Indian Health of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

There have been many criticisms levelled at federal employees. Some may be justified, but some must be considered personal grudges. There is no doubt that government employees form a sub-culture of Indian culture, with its own standards and its own hierarchy. This sub-culture is generally composed of Christian Indians who have received some portion of their education in government Indian schools. The faction breaks down into smaller groups, based on the employing federal agency, the division within the federal agency and the type of employment. Today we are beginning to deal with the third generation of individuals who have been born into "government service."

Among government employees many different attitudes exist, all stemming from the administration of a given agency. Indian personnel at Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, are insecure in their jobs. Changing military requirements and budgets lead to a turn-over in employees. On the other hand, individuals working for the Division of Indian Health of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and for the Bureau of Indian Affairs are so secure that they tend to develop a characteristic smugness. At a meeting of the State Health and Welfare Workers in 1962 at Concho, Oklahoma, an Indian administrator of the Bureau of Indian Affairs said, "Once an employee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs has established his seniority, he has no reason for anxiety about his job."

Other work of various sorts is considered respectable: manual labor in the construction industry, truck driving, work as pressers, white-collar work in offices, cosmetology and a wide variety of work within state agencies. But it is in employment that Indians are most often discriminated against. Many non-Indian employers feel that Indians are not reliable or intelligent workers. The myth that all Indians are lazy drunkards still prevails in Oklahoma. An Indian administrator in the personnel department of a large manufacturing firm stated: "I won't hire Indians, 'cause you can't depend on them." However, to offset this, there is a considerable number of employers who like Indians and who find them intelligent and willing workers. There are many Indians in Oklahoma City, both in federal and private employment, who have held their jobs for twenty to thirty years, and who have excellent employment records. Many private firms are on their second generation of Indian employees.

While discrimination against Indians exists in central and western Oklahoma, it is not one of the major problems. Many times it is discrimination against an individual rather than against his group. In some sections of the state, however, discrimination is very severe. It is to be regretted that the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights did not conduct hearings in the Cheyenne-Arapaho country where discrimination has reached its peak. The Bureau of Indian Affairs would be well advised to undertake more and better public relations work in central and western Oklahoma. The situa-

tion could be considerably improved, for example, if the suggestions of the Task Force for Information Officers were actively implemented.⁷

A curious form of discrimination against Indians by Indians themselves is the subtle manipulation of Indian society to bring influence to bear in the employment of government personnel. Recently, in a Bureau of Indian Affairs office in western Oklahoma, a vacancy was announced. An examination of candidates for the position was given. Prior to the announced examination date, word went out on the "Moccasin Telegraph" that a certain individual would get the job, and that there really was no use for anyone else to take the examination. The position went to the individual who had been announced on the Moccasin Telegraph as the likely recipient. Other applicants took the examination, but the Moccasin Telegraph probably discouraged still others.

INDIAN TRADITIONS

Indian life does not fall into rigid categories. It is, rather, a complex of interlocking circles, each exerting pressures and control upon the others. An individual functions in different capacities in these circles or groups. The family is the central unit of Indian society now, as it has been in the past. Ostensibly a senior man is the head of each family group, but one must never discount the position of the older women.

The Indian family today retains its old balance, though increase in the life span generally has raised age levels. An old person today is someone sixty years or older. These are the sages of Indian life. The active "doers" range in age from thirty to sixty years. Individuals under thirty are either getting an education, starting a new career or making it quite clear "they won't make it."

Tribal politics, while publicly dominated by younger men, is inwardly controlled by the elder members, through the restraints imposed by family ties. The desire of the older members of a tribe to hold onto the past, the need of middle-aged and young persons to hold a continuum and the attractiveness of feeling that one belongs to an in-group have enabled many tribal traditions to survive, though often in altered forms.

Tight Shoe Indians "play Indian," as they say, when they put on their moccasins and participate in tribal and intertribal gatherings. The annual summer tribal pow-wows are the culmination of a year's social activities. These three- to four-day events usually occur at the approximate time a tribe would traditionally have held a mid-summer or harvest dance. Pow-wows follow a similar pattern, but are different from each other in many ways. The Sac-Fox hold their pow-wow to honor their war veterans, and to remember the dead. The Pawnee have a "Home Coming," a time to meet old friends and to be reunited with a family for a few days. Pawnee come home from all over the United States for this occasion. Tribal pow-wows are usually financed by the sponsoring tribe from tribal funds, money

donated by tribal clubs, private gifts and sometimes by a small grant from the State of Oklahoma Planning and Resources Board.

Most of the tribes in central and western Oklahoma hold some native religious ceremonies. The Kickapoo and Sac-Fox hold their spring squaw dance with its accompanying dog sacrifice. The Cheyenne and Arapaho perform the sun dance, and the Pawnee their traditional war dance. Religious ceremonies are sometimes supported from tribal funds, but most often they are "put up" by individuals. No ceremony stopped for longer than a two-year period, even at the worst period of federal suppression of native religions. The rituals simply went underground and reëmerged when excitement had died down.

Ceremonies and philosophies have, of course, undergone change. Change will affect any dynamic religious tradition. But the recording of religious procedures insures a more consistent presentation of the ceremony, even though the philosophy may have undergone considerable change. The Cheyenne sun dance today is more like that of the 1890's because of the work of "Mr. Mooney," that is, James Mooney, the anthropologist, whose publications on ceremonies are consulted by the Indians. The individuals who participate in these socio-religious activities usually have inherited their positions as priests and leaders.

Pow-wows are usually managed by a person locally elected to the office of President. In most cases this individual belongs to a family that has held tribal leadership for many generations. The keeper of the drum, maker of songs, the cooks and holders of many more positions have, as I noted earlier, often inherited their duties. Religious ceremonies have the most rigid pattern of inherited positions. But if events make it necessary for the tribe to choose a new person for a particular position, the choice usually falls within the extended family of the previous incumbent. Individuals who hold these prestige positions in socio-religious events may not always hold prestige positions in other areas of Indian life. Their standing in other fields depends upon family lines. Prestige held in one area of Indian life extends often to all areas, however.

The traditional Plains custom of the "give-away" is the most conspicuous example of continuum of a culture trait and a prestige symbol. The give-away is usually held at a large public gathering such as a pow-wow. A give-away is held to honor a young member of a family who has achieved something that will reflect credit on the tribe. This may be dancing for the first time, coming of age, joining the armed forces, excellence in traditional crafts or accomplishments in education or employment. The family sponsoring the give-away presents old people and friends from other tribes with gifts of cloth, money, shawls, blankets and, even today, sometimes a horse. This public expansiveness will increase the prestige position of a family, even though it may leave the family financially crippled for several years.

The Woodland tribes have adapted their traditional custom of "Gift Friends" and "Smoking for Horses" to resemble the Plains give-away. However, among the Woodland tribes, the restrictions on those to whom a person may give things are much less stringent. Smoking for horses is the old Sac-Fox custom of forming tribal alliances when the Sac-Fox would entertain a visiting tribe with a big feast and dance. The Chief would smoke the pipe and give horses to the visiting chief and the Sac-Fox people would ceremonially exchange gifts with their visitors. Individuals who exchanged gifts became "gift friends." This exchange established the brother relationship between giver and receiver. Men would give to men and women would give to women; thus sister or brother friends were established for life. Today, as in the past, for all the tribes of central and western Oklahoma the custom of giving away goods at funerals, religious gatherings, weddings and other important events continues. All these traditional Indian customs follow prescribed historic lines and have been a part of Indian life for as long as recorded history can trace.

A word must be said about two innovations in Plains Indian life in Oklahoma: the Kiowa Gourd Dance Clan, and the Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache Black Leggings Societies. Alice Marriott says that today these organizations bear little resemblance to the original societies, although each group has taken its name from traditional men's societies. Many old Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache customs have been incorporated into the rituals of these societies. The members of these groups are usually well educated and in the upper economic brackets of the tribe.

The Native American Church in Oklahoma, while pan-Indian in ceremony and music, has become very diverse from tribe to tribe in its philosophy. Groups with hunting traditions emphasize the male fertility role, while the agricultural tribes place emphasis on the woman's part of reproduction. Each tribe adds to the basic ceremony ceremonies from its own culture. Each tribal group holds its own meetings, although friends from different tribes are invited, and often are given leading positions in the ceremony. The official spokesmen for the Native American Church are chosen at state meetings of the group. Today in Oklahoma about one-third of the Indian population belongs to this faith. The activities of the Native American Church form a large part of the winter social life of the Indian community. Even nonbelievers come to eat the noon meal, which follows the ceremony, with the members of the church. Thus, the Christian and non-Christian groups of a tribe participate together in one more activity.

The traditional Plains "Hands Game" is played throughout the winter months. This is a guessing game on the order of "button-button, who's got the button," in which two players from one team each hides an object in his hands to be guessed by a member of the other team. Singing to drum accompaniment, formalized gestures of guessing with an eagle feather pointer, special scoring of right and wrong guesses, and wagers make for

a pleasant and exciting pastime. Tribes, clubs within tribes, intertribal groups and just plain hand game lovers play somewhere in the state each week. Groups challenge other groups and the excitement and music of the past become joys of today. The Oklahoma Indian Council sponsored an all-state hand game tournament in the spring of 1964, at the close of the hand game season. Seven tribal teams played and 2,000 Indians attended. The tournament started at 1 P.M. Dinner was served at 5:30, and the game was followed at night by an Indian dance.

The rules of the hand game vary from place to place, usually reflecting the playing rules of the sponsoring tribe. The Woodland Indians have adopted this game to replace their traditional moccasin game. Intertribal alliances are made and Indian politics conducted at these winter gatherings in the same way that they are at the summer pow-wows. Both Christian and non-Christian Indians participate in hand games, although the Baptist Church officially frowns on this activity. The Methodist Church does not prohibit the hand game, but will not permit its being played in the recreational rooms of a church.

The urban Indian participates in these tribal and intertribal activities with his country brother. Although Indian social manners prevail, they have been altered and shaped by government boarding schools, mission activities, television and the movies to such an extent that there is little distinction between good manners in the Indian and the non-Indian worlds, although Indians still observe a formality that is not usually found in non-Indian culture.

Authority usually follows traditional patterns of tribal life. Families of influence in the past are families of influence today. The old people are the sages, as they always were, and hold the power to make final decisions for their tribes. The middle-aged people are the spokesmen and public relations personnel. If they do not carry out the wishes of the old people, become too personally ambitious or assume too much authority, they will be verbally whipped at a public gathering, and shamed into obedience by the old people.⁹ Indeed, perhaps one of the greatest problems in settling the tribal difficulties of the Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache and Comanche tribes is the struggle between leadership and authority; or between the old people and the middle-aged people. "What about the old people? They won't like it," is the inevitable question of the spokesmen-leaders. Today, as always, unanimous vote must be recorded before any action can be taken. A majority vote is not a vote at all. The only thing the majority vote accomplishes is to divide the tribe into factions. The division further complicates tribal affairs, already riddled with historic feuds.

The leaders, or spokesmen, for a tribe are elected by a majority vote of a tribe. Their authority is limited and very often they would not be able to make any innovations were it not for the pressure put on the tribe by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. If a middle-aged man has become the head of his

family group, then his authority will be recognized by the tribe. One of the present Arapaho hereditary chiefs has such a position today. He has become a middle-man between authority and leadership, bridging the gap which separates the old people from the middle-aged.

Leadership or authority are seldom given to a young individual. Today, as in the past, a man must prove he is A Man. Recently a young man who has participated in many youth conferences and has had an unsuccessful college career, ran for the tribal council of his tribe. He was not elected. The tribe chose a man who had proved his ability to conduct himself in all phases of life as A Man, rather than electing a perennial student who professed leadership but had never demonstrated his ability to be A Man.

INTERTRIBAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Moccasin Telegraph, modern highways and fast cars unite the Indians into a cultural group within the state. Yet we do not have a pan-Indian society. Each tribal gathering is distinctive and old tribal conflicts are still apparent. Intertribal relations exist and still take the same pattern they did many generations ago. Tribes live today in Oklahoma in the same geographical relation to each other as they did before removal; socially and politically the same regional alliances can be made. All Indian people have daily relations with non-Indians. Thus, the Indians remain a minority in the complex culture of Oklahoma, rather than an isolated segment of its population.

What are the effects of national Indian movements upon the Oklahoma Indians? The Youth Conference, which is held each year at the University of Oklahoma, is attended by many young people. The thrill of spending a day at the University plus the Indian dance that follows the meetings are the main incentives for the attendance. The papers presented to this conference do not seem to influence the young people. The politically articulate youth is usually the coffee-cooling Indian whose parents hung around the Indian Agent's office in the old reservation days. He is an opportunist who is viewed with distrust by other Indians. The serious, capable young man or woman goes ahead with life and leaves the talking to his parents and grandparents.

The National Congress of American Indians has little influence on the general life of western and central Oklahoma Indians, though tribal leaders are always interested in hearing about the activities and services of the Congress. It is better to listen to the other fellow than not know what he is up to, is the general attitude. The activities of the Congress have been directed towards reservation problems, and do not focus on the problems of central and western Oklahoma Indians.

There are several intertribal groups throughout central and western Oklahoma. Some of these groups are purely social, like the Oklahoma

Intertribal Pow-wow Club. Other groups which have wider programs are the Oklahoma Indian Council and the Indian project of the Family Institute of the University of Oklahoma. The "Indians for Indians" radio program on Station WNAD, Norman, Oklahoma. every Saturday morning serves as a medium of Indian communication. Tribe, intertribal group, government, church and individual announcements are read; Indian music is a feature of the program.

Although Tight Shoe Night is every night in Oklahoma, the Indian community remains a separate segment of the population which participates in two sub-cultures. Indian people live scattered among the general population, work with non-Indians and have social intercourse with all areas of Oklahoma culture. Yet Indian ceremonies continue, and Indians want to identify with Indians. Indian education advances, Indian aspirations and achievements increase, but to all appearances at present the Indians will always be The Indians.

The plight of the Indian people of central and western Oklahoma has been little changed by the present administration. Indians without reservations, they remain the forgotten children of "Wooshinton." The Welfare Officer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for western and central Oklahoma stated at a meeting at Concho, Oklahoma, in 1962, "The function of the Bureau is service to land, not to people."

The "Fact Sheet on BIA Programs and the American Indians" for January, 1963, states:

A "New Trail" for Indians leading to equal citizenship privileges and responsibilities, maximum economic self-sufficiency, and full participation in American life became the keynote for administration of the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior shortly after June 30, 1961. The major effect was to shift emphasis in Bureau programming away from purely custodial functions toward greater development of human and natural resources on Indian reservations.¹⁰

The following article by Mark Brady, "Official Outlines Indian Problems," appeared in The Daily Oklahoman on Tuesday, November 17, 1964. It illustrates the tendency to generalize a highly complex problem largely from the perspective of the reservations system.

"The disease of poverty is chronic and endemic among American Indians," a top U.S. Indian Affairs official told the Oklahoma Health and Welfare Association Monday.

Leslie P. Towle, area director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, outlined problems of the Indian and the possible solutions at a luncheon of the 22nd annual con-

ference of the association which is meeting at the Sheraton-Oklahoma Hotel.

"At the root of the Indian's problem is a psychological factor," Towle said. "Penury is not the most important matter, although the Indian lives on an average income of less than \$1,500 a year."

Towle outlined the history of the white man's treatment of the American Indian. "The Indian had a vital existence and a self-supporting life," he said. "He lived as a warrior and a hunter and he had to have great mobility.

"When he was put on a reservation with nothing to do he languished and suffered in despair," Towle said.

Towle blamed a "destructive and excessive federal paternalism" in the early days, and a continued lack of community understanding of his problems for the present-day plight of the Indian.

Citing his earlier experience as plains Indian administrator Towle described what he said was a frequent situation:

The child comes to the white man's school without any knowledge of the English language, and often without knowing the basic things he must know to cope with a white man's society;

Because of his earlier training in the hunter-warrior values of the Indian society the Indian child becomes confused by the conflicting codes of the two societies;

When he reaches adolescence he must choose between the white man's road which leads to ostracism and banishment by his family and tribal relations, "or he must follow the Indian way which is a dead end."

To ease these problems Towle urged a program of greater federal action and increased community participation. He urged the establishment of adult-child schools, where parents and their young children would be brought into schools together to begin giving the children the basic tools of the white man's culture.

"The final solution must be to place greater responsibility on the individual Indian," Towle said.

Towle, whose headquarters is at Anadarko, was one of several welfare and social workers who spoke before the various institutes and workshops at the conference.

More than 600 professional and lay welfare workers registered for the three-day meeting. A staff of 75

directed the various meetings and more than 30 exhibits by state, local and federal agencies.

Where do the Indians without reservations fit? Do they keep on going to Oklahoma public schools and colleges? Do they keep on being administrators, teachers, judges, missionaries, truck drivers, leaders in P. T. A. groups? Or do they stop and attend school with their children?

The time has arrived when the administrators of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and anthropologists should stop talking about "The Indian" floating around in time and space. Today we have enough knowledge to state, administratively and scientifically, what we are talking about temporally, geographically, legally and humanely.

There is no renaissance of Indian culture in central and western Oklahoma, because Indian culture there never died in order to be reborn. Missionaries, government personnel and do-gooders changed and altered Indian life on the surface but not beneath the surface. Basic Indian philosophy and ceremonies, like the sun dance of the Cheyenne and the Arapaho or the dog feasts of the Kickapoo and Sac-Fox, never stopped. Horses gave way to automobiles, buffalo to beef, hunting to office work, tipis to houses, braids to hair curlers, but Indians remained Indians. Tight Shoe Night is every night and every day in central and western Oklahoma.

Southwest Research Associates

Footnotes:

¹ "Fact Sheet on BIA Programs and the American Indians" (Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, January, 1963), 1.

² Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin, "Urbanization Problems of Oklahoma Indians (Distributed by Oklahoma Health and Welfare Association, 1962); see also Marriott and Rachlin, "No Reservations -- The Oklahoma Y. W. C. A. 's Intertribal Indian Center," The Y. W. C. A. Magazine, LVIII, 8 (November, 1964), 11-13.

³ Lewis Meriam, The Problem of Indian Administration (Baltimore, 1928), 48-50.

⁴ Carol K. Rachlin, "The Native American Church of Oklahoma," The Chronicles of Oklahoma (not yet released at time of publication; available through Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City).

⁵ "1 in 7 Pupils Handicapped," Oklahoma City Times (November 12, 1964), 37.

⁶ "Oklahoma City -- Growth at a Glance. 1963 Economic Development Report. First Six Months" (Industrial Division, Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, 1964).

⁷ "Report to the Secretary of the Interior by the Task Force on Indian Affairs (Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, July 10, 1961).

⁸ Carol K. Rachlin, "Powwow," Oklahoma Today, XIV, 2 (Spring, 1964), 18-22.

⁹ Cf. Alice Marriott, The Ten Grandmothers (Norman, Oklahoma, 1945).

¹⁰ See footnote 1. See also the BIA pamphlet "Answers to Questions About the American Indian" (1963), 1.