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Great Plains Studies, Center for

Summer 1983

**Review of *Indian Policy in the United States: Historical Essays* By
Francis Paul Prucha**

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BOOK REVIEWS

Indian Policy in the United States: Historical Essays. By Francis Paul Prucha. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981. Maps, notes, index. 272 pp. \$19.95.

For two decades, Francis Paul Prucha of Marquette University has produced a steady stream of scholarly publications on nineteenth-century American Indian policy. Sixteen of Prucha's lectures and articles, including some never before published, are gathered together in this volume with brief headnotes that indicate the circumstances under which they were written and some reactions to them.

The first two essays concern the study and writing of the history of Indian policy. Prucha warns that the historian's task is neither activism nor special pleading, urges scholars to be more fully conscious of the historical context in which the events in Indian-white relations took place, and suggests that more attention be paid to the administration of Indian policy.

The third and fourth essays are overviews of federal policy. They contend that Indian policy has consistently reflected the fundamental intellectual patterns of American life and can be understood only within that context. Using such examples as the "humanitarian or benevolent" elements of Indian removal, efforts at Americanizing or "civilizing" (used without quotation marks) the Indians during the nineteenth century, and the Indian New Deal of John Collier, Prucha argues that Indian policy did not stand by itself outside the general trends of American thought and sentiment. Although he views the spokesmen of Indian "reform" as sincerely dedicated to "a new day" for the Indians, Prucha acknowledges that "the Indian has been asked to march to all kinds of drummers—except his own" (p. 35).

A dozen essays then follow in the chronological order of their subject matter. The topics covered range from the image of the Indian in pre-Civil War America to the decline of the influence of Christian reformers on the formulation of Indian policy during the Progressive Era. The common thread is Prucha's determined effort to understand, rather than to judge, the course of nineteenth-century American Indian policy and his steadfast refusal to condemn people for failing to see beyond the horizons of their age. Undoubtedly the most controversial essay is Prucha's reassessment of Andrew Jackson, in which he argues that Jackson was "genuinely concerned" about Indian welfare (p. 146).

This is an important collection of historical essays by one of the leading revisionist scholars of American Indian policy. Although the essays are generally well written and documented, there are some internal inconsistencies. For example, Prucha attempts in one essay to refurbish Jackson's image in Indian affairs by stressing the national security implications of his removal policy, but in the following essay he neglects these aspects and concomitant proposals for social control in the government's educational efforts when he discusses Indian policy in the 1840s as a reform movement. In a footnote in the eighth essay (originally published in 1963), Prucha acknowledges that another historian has recently demonstrated the inaccuracy of his assertion that Major Stephen Long's report on the so-called Great American Desert did not play a role in the debates on the Removal Act of 1830. Not all of the other essays that have been previously published, however, are similarly annotated with references to the most current scholarship on the topics under consideration. Despite such shortcomings,

the author and the publisher have performed a valuable service by making these important essays easily accessible to serious students of Indian-white relations and federal Indian policy.

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