

The Prophecy

Anderson Dirthrower

When I was in my teens I used to live with an old Indian man by the name of George Cardinal and he was a pretty wise old man. So one day he told me, he said, "I'm going to tell you some things that you're going to see come to pass in your lifetime." He said, "The first thing that you're going to see in your life is slick roads everywhere." Well in that time, you know, there wasn't too many paved roads in Oklahoma. There was just dirt roads and gravel roads and asphalt. And when he said slick roads I thought he was talking about something like a rail on a railroad. I couldn't imagine what he meant by that.

"And," he said, "the second thing that you're going to see is that you're going to see a lot of deaf and blind people on the street, just walking around everywhere on the street. And the third thing is you're going to see the White Man become too smart." And by too smart, he meant by that, always thinking and too removed from the things that count, that you can rely on. You know, that is where you would just depend on your own head instead of what the old people say that was given from God. And also, to be too smart in that sense, my people mean to be too narrow. To think too much with your mind on just one thing and leave out too much.

"And," he said, "then you're going to see a fourth thing." He said, "When you see that fourth thing, I'm not going to tell you what it is, you'll see that fourth thing and it's going to follow from those first three things. When you see that fourth thing," he said, "that's the time you'll want your children close to you."

Well along about the fifties, by that time of course there'd been paved roads around everywhere for a long time, and it hit me one time that that's what he must have been talking about. That these paved highways is what he was talking about—slick roads. And the second thing, I could see that a lot of people—well the way I thought of it then I didn't really understand that second thing. But the way I thought of it then was that people was too busy to pay any attention to you. Now I come later to understand that he was meaning people had lost their kinship to one another; that they were getting cut off from everybody else and everything else. But at the time when I saw the first thing I thought I knew what the second thing was. I thought that people was too busy to pay attention to you, you know, they were too busy trying to get somewhere they couldn't see or hear you.

And the third thing, I could see that all around me in the fifties, that was plainly clear. You couldn't get anybody to talk about anything important; for one thing they didn't think about anything. You know people was spending money on things that didn't seem to have much to do about anything. And you could see there was at the same time a belief that thinking was the way to get through the world. Everybody was going to college and there was no premium set on human wisdom or human experience at all. Or no premium on what Jesus might have said. Or what anybody said besides just what you could figure out from

the ground floor with your own head focusing on one little narrow thing.

And the fourth thing I could see in that time that followed from those other three things was the old people's homes. . . . people putting their old people away. And I could see that in California with those old people cities.

And I guess it was maybe six years ago those things began to really become clear to me. We had those roads everywhere, in the backwoods even. And there was a world that those roads came from, a civilization, that was completely cut off from the natural world. And that it wasn't only that people were trying to get somewhere, but they were sewed up in their own skin and couldn't see or hear you. So I was seeing the full meaning of that.

I could also see where that narrow thinking and the attention paid to science and education had taken us by the sixties—the kind of hardness of it, and nobody giving a damn about nobody else. I always knew the wild things was like dead to most white people, but now they was getting so they treated each other like dead things. They just looked through you like you wasn't even there. And some of them was getting hollow-eyed like they was dead inside too.

And then seeing the sadness of that treatment of those old people hit me. Because I also saw that not only were those old people put away but that most of them didn't have any wisdom. That most of them were cranks like their children say. That they hadn't lived the kind of life that would have given them any kind of human wisdom. So that there was not only not a premium to it but it wasn't even there any more to discard. And that was when I knew I wanted my children close to me. That was in the

sixties and I really began to understand what the old man was talking about.

You know that's the way the Indians think about things. If somebody tells us something we don't have to come to understand it right away. We'll think on it a long time. Like if something happens to us when we were kids, like if we have a dream or something, we might not understand what that means until we are in, say, our forties. Generally, for the Indians, it's when we become in our forties that we usually, as the old people say, gain some understanding.

You see I used to feel sorry for those old people and I still do but there ain't a helluva lot of them that could tell you anything. Because a lot of them hadn't made anything out of their lives. They've been producers and when they stopped they just became non-producers. In this civilization a non-producer is a nothing and if you are a producer you believe that about other people and yourself, that you're a nothing. But there's no way to produce wisdom. You have to be shot through with human experience to get to that point in your life. The old Indians was so stuffed full of life that they didn't mind dying when it was time to die. That's the way my Grandpa and George Cardinal was, overflowing with life. They were wise and could tell a young man something to help him.

You know they pay people to do that in this civilization. They have departments of philosophy. They pay people to do what every man should do and every man always did in his life up until lately. When you pay a man to do that I don't think you're going to get very much for your money. Those old White people I used to know in the South, they had a lot more to say about the wisdom of the West than anybody in those philosophy departments.

That's for damn sure. And what this means to me personally is that them little kids haven't got the kind of grandpa to talk to like I did.



Conversations with North American Indians

Ted Poole

White-Indian relations in Canada are exemplary of a drama in conflicts which is being played out all over the world. Mr. Shakespeare's world stage, thanks to modern electronic communications, has now become a reality. The Viet Nam run is attended by a world audience, as was the Biafran scene. Everyone watches with an awareness that he has a personal stake in the outcome of these recurring dramas and in the principles of human dignity with which each, in turn, is concerned.

The parallels and similarities are obvious. What are the issues? Color? Yes, but only superficially. Race? Yes, but below the skin, these are conflicts of culture, collisions of life-values and life-modes. Boiled down, they may mean that the White, Narcissistic product of Western civilization, embarrassed by any unconformity, is determined to remake the world in his own image.

In Canada, this altruistic determination targets Indians and Eskimos. It is called Integration. Integration is a one-way street, running from Indian reserves to urban centers. Integration is a structural process—institutional, educational, vocational—for turning Indians into acceptable, brown-skinned (but otherwise White) Canadian citizens. It is attractive to Whites because it provides a means of restitution for past wrongs and, simultaneously, a practical solution to an embarrassing problem.