

1990

Getting to the Heart of the Matter: Collected Letters and Papers

Robert K. Thomas

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GETTING to the

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Collected Letters and Papers

Native Ministries Consortium

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Forward

This collection of some of the writings of Robert (Bob) Thomas, Cherokee elder, practitioner of the Cherokee traditional religion, mentor to a wide variety of younger Indian leaders, and anthropologist at the University of Arizona, were written over the last twenty-five years. They were written for different groups of people - some for Indians and others directed more to non-Indians, some for academics and others for a general audience. They cover a wide range of subjects and use a variety of writing styles. But all display Bob's great concern and passion, that which drives him - the survival of Indians as peoples. The nature of an authentic survival, the way to enduring peoplehood, is clearly spelled out in hard-hitting terms.

The publication of these papers is made possible by the Native Ministries Consortium, a group which has profited much by Bob's wisdom and support. The members of the Consortium are the Vancouver School of Theology, in whose buildings their office is located; the Charles Cook Theological School in Tempe, Arizona; the Diocese of Caledonia of the Anglican Church of Canada; and the British Columbia Native Ministries Group of the United Church of Canada. The mandate of this ecumenical consortium is to develop, under native direction, community-based education programs for native ministries, both lay and ordained. Bob has been an integral part of the Native Ministries Consortium Summer School which has been held for the last five years in Vancouver, teaching courses and acting as consultant and advisor.

It is the hope of the Consortium that these writings will be a source of inspiration and guidance in the struggle for "enduring peoplehood."

Daphne Anderson
Editor

This article was written in the spring of 1989 for a University of Arizona Indian student publication called Red Ink.

American society is well known for its ability to incorporate and absorb disparate social and cultural groups. Some intellectuals have likened America to a great social and cultural "cement mixer," a huge homogenization machine. Conversely, it is difficult for distinct groups and peoples to survive, socially and culturally, in such a milieu.

Pre-Revolutionary War English speaking groups - Scots-Irish, English Puritans, etc. - no longer have a consciousness of themselves as socially and culturally distinct. Some non-English speaking groups who came to America in the 1700s, like the Germans in Maryland or the Scots of eastern North Carolina, have been completely absorbed. The Germans who settled in the Midwest in the 1800s left their cultural "stamp" on areas like Wisconsin, but they are just "like everybody else" now. And only in the working class area of South Boston does one find any semblance of a distinctively Irish population. Even the Jews, those most accomplished of survivors, are teetering on the brink of social and cultural oblivion in America, with an almost 45% out-marriage rate.

Physical isolation has contributed to the survival of the Spanish speaking people of northern New Mexico and the Acadian French (Cajuns) of southern Louisiana. But their isolation is breaking down now. That new factor along with their lack of economic power places their survival at risk. The German speaking Amish, the "Plain People," came to America in the early 1700s and now live in Pennsylvania and in communities scattered throughout the Midwest. The price that they pay for survival is perpetual analysis and vigilance. They are wary of modern technology and the American school system. They try to live their lives and ignore the rest of America. The Amish are economically successful, fine farmers and hard workers; and thus Americans are willing to leave them alone.

American Indian peoples are now in a fight for survival whether we know it or not. At least one-half of the Indian population now lives in American cities. Marriage with non-Indians is extremely high among urban Indians and they live scattered among other groups. They seem to be in the process of social absorption. In rural areas language loss is spectacular in Indian groups and many young rural Indians are oriented toward the mores and values of the general society. In spite of this precarious situation few Indian groups have a clear notion of their destiny, an idea of what they wish to look like in the future. I see no analysis of our situation; no critical evaluation of how American society affects our lives; no clear goals and directions; and therefore no strategy or tactics by which we might deal with our destiny. We accept the American educational system as an unqualified good, even though it is one of the greatest propaganda mechanisms for inculcating the values of a society (in this case the general American society) into children ever devised. We sit and watch television turn our children into standard American working class consumers. Our elders are now so

demoralized that they have learned simply to say nothing and look the other way.

Most Indians do seem to have some rather vague and unformulated aspirations; a desire to retain a distinctive culture and social existence while at the same time wanting a piece of the economic action in America, and to be seen by others as members of respectable Indian communities which are part of the general American society. Perhaps these are contradictory aspirations? But I hear no one discussing the subject and certainly no one writing to and posing these questions to their fellow Indians. Indians, by and large, sit passively until the general society acts directly toward them, and then they react. After the threat is over Indians return to their passive stance. Indian activists remind me of the little Dutch boy, sticking all their fingers into a collapsing dike, but with no overall direction.

I hear talk among Indians that we must "listen to our elders" or that "we must preserve our culture," but I see no action following from such slogans. Rather, I see educated Indians trying to make a place for themselves in the general society. I hear about "Indian self-determination" and "Indian sovereignty." Yet our tribes have less decision-making power than any other kind of community in the United States. It is unlikely that Americans will simply allow a passive group that "feeds at the federal trough" much decision-making power. And tribal politicians seem only willing to preserve the status quo. All over the world various peoples are fighting for their freedom, but we seem numbed by our years of dependency and content with the crumbs of freedom and "charity" that fall from the white mans table. I get the uneasy feeling that we have come to believe the slogans that we present to the non-Indian public.

Perhaps now is the time for us to talk seriously to one another about our situation and our destiny, and what we need to do to survive.

Further, we need more than a direction, we need a vision. When I was a young man there were Cherokees alive then who had been born and came to adulthood in the 1800's in the days of the Cherokee Nation, before the formation of the state of Oklahoma in 1907. The Cherokee Nation was an independent republic with real decision-making power, a fine Cherokee school system, an independent legal and court system, and so on. It contrasts sharply with modern reservations which are indirectly ruled by federal authorities. Those older Cherokees of my youth still had in their minds the Cherokee vision of that time - the vision of a decent society which combined Cherokee values and the best of Jeffersonian democracy. They were forever contrasting what they felt was the harshness and unfairness of the Oklahoma legal system with Cherokee laws and legal procedures, a more humane system in their eyes.

Like most Cherokees my age I grew up learning that vision. I thought that vision

would last as long as there were Cherokees. But most Cherokees under forty now have a different vision - the American standard of living and the desire to attain respectability in the eyes of whites. That generation is not teaching their children the Cherokee language, therefore. Who needs an outmoded language? Houses, television, cars, etc. are more important to them than the Cherokee literary tradition. I think that Cherokees my age have let the school system "capture" our children. But if Cherokees are to survive, we had better recapture our grandchildren or we will simply become brown Oklahomans. We must teach our grandchildren the Cherokee vision again.

All of us, all the tribes, need some kind of vision; perhaps a common vision, to sustain us. Houses and cars do not sustain the soul, as is clear in America today. It is the world of the spirit that nourishes our humanness. Our elders passed on that torch of the spirit to us. We must keep that torch burning not only for ourselves, but for other peoples as well. The world needs such a vision in these times.

We must keep that fire of our own humanity, our Indianess, alive or we will perish without a whimper, and the North American earth will prevail without us.

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LETTER TO FRIENDS

December 18, 1982

Dear Friends:

After reading over my last letter to all of you, I decided that although I had outlined why I thought we needed to discuss direction and "tactics" at our next meeting I still had not laid out my general position on Indian affairs for you. I will do so now and I would hope that all of you will do the same at our next meeting or by mail.

Let me start by giving you some personal intellectual history.

When I was growing up, Cherokee elders told me that we were a captive nation, living under the exploitative heel of the foreigners and having our lives regulated by their harsh and ungodly "law" (culture). Our only recourse was to "lay quiet" until conditions changed and then opt for freedom and our own "law" (independence). Cherokee elders would have, and most still do, viewed any accommodation between Cherokees and whites as impossible and absurd, on the face of it. I know that most tribes are not quite as separatist-minded and nationalistic as Cherokees, but my experience is that traditional elders in most tribes hold the above position to some degree.

I went to college after World War II and learned then that most well-meaning whites interested in Indian affairs felt that Indian assimilation into American society was "inevitable." Such assimilation was felt to be unfortunate in that many beautiful cultures would be lost, but it was for the best in the long run that "we" all be one homogenous society. Even Indian "leaders" gave public lip service to this cliché at Indian conferences in the late '40s. It may very well be that death, as the Freudians say, reconciles all tensions, but I personally was not overjoyed by such a prospect. I was young then and overwhelmed by such an attitude as voiced by older, prestigious whites and Indians. Neither did I know how to articulate my disagreement, so I just avoided the "Indian affairs" scene.

In the early '50s, in graduate school, I began to meet academics who felt that Indian assimilation was not inevitable and further, that Indian societies given the opportunity could come to terms with American society. This was a new, powerful, and optimistic outlook. I did not see at the time that this view was based on little scientific evidence and was primarily a statement of faith in the general American society, in the American ideals, if you will. In any case, by the mid-50s I was a "convert"; and for the next ten years I was an active proponent of Indian "self-determination". The Indian workshops in Colorado with which I was associated, became a center in the promulgation of these ideas.

By the mid-60s, I was beginning to have grave doubts about this stance. My experience in running an action anthropology research project in eastern Oklahoma in this era had made me a little wiser about the nature of the American establishment. There was then, as you no doubt remember, a great optimism in many sectors of American society about the possibility of reform, particularly by "grass-roots" action and by protest. However, I was beginning to suspect that the "system" was much more rigid and power more centralized and self-protective than I had thought. Further, it appeared to me that seeming attempts on the part of the federal government to facilitate "self-determination" were simply a "fake-out". My association with Robert Kennedy convinced me of that, and later events in the early '70s confirmed my hunch. "Self-determination" turned out to be an arrangement whereby an Indian elite operates a structure created and enlarged by the federal government; a structure regulated by laws, rules, and guidelines set up by the federal government; and a structure which has no real power except what is allowed by the federal government. "Self-determination's" lineal descendent, "Indian sovereignty", has become primarily a plea for more control over Indians by the Indian elite.

On the basis of my rather unformulated unease in the mid-60s I began to withdraw from the self-determination arena and began to be involved in 1967 in the Traditional Movement, and later in the Indian Ecumenical movement. I also began to try to help Indians with local "community development" attempts. I had decided at that point in time that we needed to strengthen our social cohesion internally and "preserve"

our languages and cultures; and that working with the "system" was not only useless, but perhaps socially destructive. However, I was not exactly sure what it was about the system that made it so unreformable and unapproachable. I concluded that greed and power were the villains in the piece; a rather over-simplified analysis, to say the least.

In 1968 I moved to the Detroit area. I had formerly lived in Detroit from 1959 to 1962. In that period Detroit was a city of real neighborhoods and some fairly "tight" ethnic groups. When I returned in 1968 all of that had virtually disappeared. At the same time, academics and intellectuals generally began to "discover" that ethnic groups were "alive and well" in American cities and that America, fortunately, was actually a pluralistic society and not a melting pot. I was almost sucked into that fantasy, but I had had enough of wish-fulfillment masquerading as social science so I began to look at the evidence.

Ethnic groups were still "alive" alright, but they were far from "well". For instance, most middle class Italians had entered the middle class as nuclear family groups and had virtually demolished "la familia". (The movie series on the Godfather illustrates this process only too well.) Working class Italians still held on to "la familia", but they had lost their neighborhoods and organizations in most areas. (Now, in 1982, they are virtually as massified as the middle class.) In 1970 the Jews, those most accomplished survivors in hostile civilizations, had made it into the middle class suburbs as whole social groups, but were evidencing a 25% out-marriage rate and the bedrock emphasis in Jewish culture on intellectuality and social justice had eroded considerably.

What cultural pluralism means in America is that if you are willing to live in isolated nuclear family groups, take your place in the corporate economic structure, keep up your property, do not object to your own powerlessness, and put aside those valued ways of being that make you who and what you are (like manly honor, loyalty, obedient children, etc.) then you can eat spaghetti in the home, go to the Catholic church on Sunday, and put on an ethnic costume and jump around at an ethnic festival once in a while. This is the future the system offers Indians as well.

I think that by the early 1970s I had figured out why I thought that it was useless to try to accommodate to or deal with the system; and more, why it might even be destructive to get too close and intermeshed in it. The American social system individuates and massifies. It is hostile to communities, to families, to those who live in a sacred world, and to any deviant culture in its midst. Further, special community rights, as in the case with Indians, is antithetical to every trend in American society. It is a big homogenization machine. Our situation is even more precarious than my elders imagined.

As you know, the militant fever hit Indians in the early '70s. I was both pleased

and appalled. I was pleased at the "feistiness" of our young people. On the other hand, I thought Indian protest was a little late, ill-timed, and misdirected. I was appalled by the lack of analysis behind actions and soon became tired of all the black and white student bromides from the '60s, dressed up in feathers, which were perpetually chanted by young militants. A Cherokee chief once said, "What starts with noise usually ends up as noise." And I am afraid that, by and large, such was the outcome of Indian militancy. However, it was a good educational experience for many young Indians.

Recently, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction and the Indian elite, at least, seems "gung ho" for the piece of the system now.

At this point in history, I think our main job is to survive America; as we did the glaciers, droughts, invasion, conquest, and so forth. If I am right that means we must attend to the social and cultural strength of our tribes, engage only in protective measures vis-a-vis the general society, and place Indians in key institutional niches of the system as "scouts". If this analysis is correct then an alliance must be forged between Indian "intellectuals" and elders. I was very impressed by a meeting I attended in upper Michigan last summer on Ted Holappa's reservation. Perhaps Ted will tell us about his efforts in this regard at our coming meeting. He tells me that he will be there.

As you know, I am the director of an Indian Studies program at the University of Arizona. I try to do a good job for the "institution" that pays my salary, in its terms and in my students' terms. In view of my sense of the Indian situation as I have spelled it out above, I try to impart some analytic ability to my students. I do not expect them to agree with my analysis, but I do expect them to be analytic. That is as much as I feel I can do to meet what I think are our needs within the confines of a white institution.

However, my job gives me time to do other things on the side. I am involved in promoting literacy in the Papago language; hopefully, this will strengthen the Papago language. I am promoting an informal Papago elders association; and encouraging some religious and community reconstitution. Next summer several knowledgeable men and I are taking the Cherokee wampum belts around to key Oklahoma Cherokee communities and to North Carolina, and "explaining" their message. I hope next year to reinstitute the Ecumenical movement, but on a more solid base this time. And, of course, I am helping build our intellectual "cadre."

There you have it! I have tried to spell out my sense of the Indian "problem" and what kind of tactics I, personally, opt for in dealing with the situation.

At the coming meeting, I want very much to hear from you what you think is the central problem for Indians and how we, as intellectuals, might deal with that problem.

Hope to see you in January!

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

The Chicago Indian Conference of 1961 culminated in a document called "The Declaration of Purpose." This document was a summation of the "sense" of the Conference and was largely oriented toward influencing federal government Indian policy. My reading of the Declaration indicates two specific concerns and another more general concern.

The two specific concerns were self-determination and economic development, and the more general concern was the issue of cultural preservation. However, one gets the impression that the framers of the Declaration of Purpose felt that if the Indian land base was made secure and tribes were given more decision making power within a firm and lasting federal-Indian framework, then Indian cultural (and social?) survival was assured. More, throughout the document there is an implicit faith that a higher educational level for Indians is essential in the solving of all these "problems".

Let me very briefly evaluate these thrusts of the Declaration of purpose, some twenty-five years later. Tribal governments have indeed achieved some degree of self-determination in the last twenty-five years. There has been no legal transfer of power from the federal government to tribes in this period, but the approval of the Secretary of Interior over the acts of tribal councils is now largely pro forma for all except very important issues. As the educational level of Indians has increased and as Indian politicians and administrators have come to share a common outlook (a common sense of problem and solutions) with federal administrators, the Department of Interior has come to trust the judgment of tribal governments.

Secondly, the federal policy of contracting services to tribal governments has given the "institution" of tribal government some clout, and has involved more local people in the political process because of now available political patronage. In some tribes political machines have been built on this political patronage system.

There has been some modicum of economic development in the last twenty-five years, particularly mineral resource development. (Presently, the competition between whites and Indians for resources, minerals, water, land, space, clean air, etc., is reaching a crisis point in parts of the South west and the northern plains.) However, the major source of rural Indian income has come to be employment in tribal programs, and the economy of most tribes has suffered recently due to federal budget cuts.

It is in the area of cultural survival (and, perhaps, future social survival) that one

sees the major problem for Indians in these days. The Chicago Indian Conference did not adequately assess the dangers to Indian culture in 1961, nor could the Conference foresee new forces which would appear on the Indian scene in the sixties and seventies; forces which would adversely affect Indian culture survival.

Some 50% all American Indians now live in cities, and the majority of this present-day population are young people who were born and raised in the city. Many of them seem to me very much like other urban young people of a similar class level. Indians of the inner city do associate with other Indians and visit or spend long period at "home." However, those Indians who live in mixed ethnic working class areas, at least 50% of city Indians, seem to me to be in the process of social absorption.

Some observers feel that urban Indians will, because of the heightened consciousness which develops from a city experience, spark off a cultural revival which will revitalize Indians as a whole. However, such efforts are yet in their infancy. More, Indians have as yet no intellectual "class" which could conceptualize and define such a movement.

Rural Indian communities, both those on and off reservations, vary considerably at present. On some reservations most adults between twenty-five and fifty are away working in the city, leaving behind older people, children, and very young adults. Such communities may well be in the process of social absorption. Other Indian communities are more socially whole. But most evidence serious social ills - alcoholism, juvenile crime, etc., as well as deteriorating health. And most importantly, nearly all tribes are showing considerable cultural and language loss.

It is my impression that most rural Indians under forty are very different from those over forty - more materialistic, more interested in acquiring social rank among both Indians and whites, more individuated and thus less committed to home and kin, more secular, more "impolite" (by Indian standards), etc. More, few Indians under forty see themselves as members of distinct, unique, autonomous peoples who are surrounded by a more numerous and powerful society. They see themselves simply as an American variant with a special heritage. After two and a half decades of integrated schools, Head Start programs, a high educational level, T.V., and social welfare programs (low-cost housing, A.D.C., etc.) which have weakened the Indian family, it is no surprise that these above changes have come about; nor that the vast majority of rural Indians under forty are not teaching their children an Indian language.

A key factor in this cultural endangerment is language loss. Language loss has been massive in the last ten years - western Sioux, Cherokee, Oklahoma Choctaw, most Apache tribes, Navaho, Pima, Ute, etc. Tribes in which the native language is strong today can literally be counted on one's fingers. Perhaps some very gross features of a tribal people's world view and perceptions can be transferred into English, but by and

large the disappearance of a language means a major alteration in such a world view. More, it means in modern circumstances that such a people have surrendered their intellectual autonomy and independence to another society.

In many English-speaking Indian communities there is a significant disparity between verbalized values and actual behavior. Parents in such communities will say things to their children such as, "You should get an education and make something of yourself." Yet, when these children leave home for "better opportunities," these same parents will be shocked and hurt to the core of their being. It appears that such people have learned their behavior and unconscious values from their parents, but verbalize their lives in terms of public school slogans.

At minimum, language loss means that a tribal people does not have an appropriate conceptual vehicle by which to examine, analyze, and talk about their own life.

In some sense, Indian tribes are becoming collections of generalized tribal personalities without a truly native institutional structure nor a coherent culture, tradition, and language.

Perhaps, Indians could survive profound cultural loss, all other factors being equal, and continue as social groups if Indian tribes were not tiny minority peoples in a sea of powerful aliens. However, all of those minority peoples in the Old World who have survived in such circumstances have four features in common:

1. a distinct language, even if it simply functions as a holy language;
2. a unique religion, even if it is their own special version of a world religion;
3. a tie to a particular piece of land, a homeland and a holy land;
4. a sacred history which tells you who you are and why you must survive as a people.

Few Indian tribes show these four features today.

Thus, it is my opinion that unless some revolutionary steps are taken, Indian tribes will survive neither as distinct cultural nor social groups: revolutionary steps such as the development of Indian language school texts, the teaching of course content in Indian languages in local Indian schools, the revival of Indian religions, reform of the structure of tribal governments, and so on.

I think that we have five years before the die is cast and before it will be too late

to take the needed steps to insure our cultural and social survival.

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THE TAP-ROOTS OF PEOPLEHOOD

This was written in the mid-'80s for, and circulated to, a group of twenty or so Indian scholars - academics, former students, activists, etc.

I am writing this article to all of you for two reasons. First, I want to begin to repay the debt I owe various Indian peoples for their kindness and help as I have lived and studied among them for over thirty years now. I hope this letter will be the beginning repayment of my debt to all of you.

The second reason for this article is that I felt an obligation as a scientist, to report the results of our research to concerned people. Since I am an Indian I feel I have a special responsibility to my own people. So I will report to you about something in which I am sure you will be interested.

For some years now a number of scholars, myself among them, have been interested in how small nationalities survive when they are part of large nations and are surrounded by large, very different majority groups. Of course, American Indian tribes are prime examples of these kinds of small nationalities.

At this stage of research it appears that those minority peoples who have survived over a long period of time have at least four things in common:

1. Their own language; examples are the Coptic Christians of Egypt, the Basques of Spain, the Welsh of the British Isles, the Ainu of Japan, and the Maya of Yucatan in Mexico.

In some cases, a people's own language may only be used in religious activities. Jews in Europe and America speak the legal language of the country in which they live, but use Hebrew in the synagogue. The Seneca Indians of New York use English as a daily language, but their own language in religious ceremonies.

The Germans of central North Carolina stopped using German daily by 1850, but kept on using German in church until World War I. The same is true

generally of the Scots near Fayetteville, N.C. When these groups stopped using German and Gaelic in their churches their ability to hold together dissolved and they are no long distinct communities.

In a few instances, a people's own language may be a special variety of a more widespread language, such as the French of the Cajuns in Louisiana, or the English of the Lumbee of eastern North Carolina. In some cases a language may work for a people's survival as more than just a symbol. A language can be a good boundary marker for a group. The use of a language can tell you who is "in" and who is not a member of that people. Further, a language can hide important parts of a people's life from the eyes of powerful and prying outsiders. And, of course, a language contains and expresses the unique culture and view of the world of a people.

2. Their own religion: examples are the Jews, the Gypsies, and Mapuche Indians of Chile, the Hopi of Arizona, the Kickapoo of Oklahoma and Mexico, the Sontal of India, and the Lapps of Norway and Sweden.

Many times a people's own religion may be their version of a world-wide religion. Examples are the Yaqui and Pueblo Indian brand of Catholic worship, the Creek Indian version of the Baptist religion, Welsh Methodism, the Fulani of Nigeria brand of Islam, the Kalmuck variety of Buddhism in the Soviet Union, and the Toda style of Hinduism in India.

16. A tie to a particular piece of land, a Homeland which is often a Holy Land as well. The Jews relation to Palestine is, of course, the best known example of a people's tie to a particular piece of land. Other examples are the Papago tie to southern Arizona, the Choctaw tie to central Mississippi, the Irish feeling for the island of Eire, the Zapotec Indian relation to the land in southern Mexico, the Kurd's love for western Iran, and the Oglala Sioux tie to the Black Hills.
17. A sacred history which spells out a people's relationship to God, to a land, to history, to destiny, and to other nationalities. The Jewish Torah (the first five books of the Bible, plus oral accounts) is just such a sacred history. Other groups, like the Irish and Welsh, have complete written sacred histories, but most sacred histories are passed on by word of mouth. Some Indian peoples like the Papago and Yaqui are right now recording their sacred histories in written form. Andrew Dreadfulwater of Tahlequah is presently writing down the Cherokee sacred history as it is known in Oklahoma.

To some peoples one of these above four features may be a more important symbol of their peoplehood than the other three. For instance, it is hard to imagine Cherokees continuing as a people without a large portion of their population speaking

Cherokee by preference, and with at least a few people being able to read in Sequoya's writing system. The Cherokee language is the important symbol of Cherokee identity. In that same vein, the Jews have made their religion the focus of their peoplehood. And it seems that Indian tribes like the Yaqui and the Hopi are as much religious congregations as they are groups of relatives.

Edward H. Spicer, a prominent student of Indian life in the Southwest, has in recent years turned his attention toward the small nationalities of western Europe - Irish, Welsh, Basques, Jews, etc. On the basis of that research he feels that the most important of these four important "survival" features is a sacred history. He thinks that such a sacred history is essential if a group is to feel itself to be a special, unique, and permanent people.

There are other symbols of peoplehood which may be important - music, song, dance, heroes, dress - but the above four seem to be the most important. It is unclear at this stage of research how important an independent economic base is to the survival of the enclaved small nationalities. We do know that both the Gypsies and Jews have held special occupations within European and American society at various times, but we are not sure what that means for their survival as peoples.

Among some enduring peoples the very absence of, or the losing of, one of these important four symbols can, in itself, become a strong symbol of peoplehood. The Jewish Holy Land became very important to Jews just because they were driven from it. A strong part of the Gypsy self-image is that they are a people without a homeland and destined to wander among foreigners. North Carolina Cherokees, in their own eyes, are those Cherokees who faithfully cling to the Cherokee Homeland. The Gaelic language became a strong symbol of peoplehood to the Irish at the very time Gaelic had almost disappeared.

The destiny of Indian peoples in North America is not yet very clear. Most Indian peoples have only been enclaved for one hundred or two hundred years now, a short time in any people's history. However, there are already many Indian peoples in the U.S. which seem on the verge of disappearance. In such tribes the native language is almost extinct. The original native religion is no longer practiced and they have developed no native Christianity. Their land is no longer a Holy Land and hardly even a Homeland. And their sacred history has become stories told simply to entertain.

There are some Indian tribes which are consciously preserving all of these four cornerstones of their life - their language, their religion, their Holy Land, and their sacred history. These are the Yaqui, Hopi, and Pueblos of the Southwest; the Creek and Kickapoo of Oklahoma; and the Miccosukkee of Florida. If they are not wiped out by war or disease, these tribes will no doubt survive. Some other tribes might be included in this same category - the Choctaw of Mississippi, the Crow of Montana, the Ute of Utah,

the Papago of Arizona, the Oglala Sioux of South Dakota, and perhaps the Oklahoma Choctaw and Cherokee. (There are some tribes about which I am not sure - the Apaches of the Southwest, and Yakima of Washington, the Warm Springs of Oregon, the Potawatomie of Kansas and Wisconsin, and the Shawnee of Oklahoma, etc. I just do not have current information about their situations, but they were very traditional peoples twenty years ago. Further, the situation of other tribes like the Navajo, Winnebago, Iroquois, Coushatta, Seminole, etc. seems to be in a state of flux. I cannot see a clear direction emerging for these peoples.) However, the majority of American Indian peoples seem on the point of disappearance as distinct peoples.

When a minority people loses their special characteristics they come more and more to look like the majority group which surrounds them. At that point, they will begin to see themselves simply as a variety of the national society; and usually as a low ranked and unworthy part of this larger society of which they now feel a part. Then such weakened peoples lose the strength to keep their youth "close to home." Marriage with outsiders becomes common and younger members as individuals move away in great numbers. Their community becomes like other communities in their area and their history as a people ends. California, northern Mexico, New Mexico, the coastal South, and extreme northeastern Oklahoma all contain Mexican, white, or black communities who were once distinct Indian peoples.

Let me take the North Carolina Cherokees as an example - a people I know and about which I care. Fifty years ago the eastern Cherokees had retained all of these characteristics which are important for the survival of an enclaved people. The Cherokee language was in daily use both in the home and in all public institutions. Cherokee churches practiced a truly Cherokee Christianity and native ceremonies were still performed. Western North Carolina was both the Cherokee Homeland and the Cherokee Holy Land to almost every Cherokee. Word of mouth accounts of the Cherokee sacred history were still told in the home and on some public occasions.

However, Cherokee life in North Carolina has changed quite a bit in recent years. The Cherokee language is spoken in fewer homes every year and English is the public language even in Cherokee churches and in tribal government. (It is possible that there will be no more North Carolina Cherokees really fluent in the Cherokee language in sixty years!) Cherokee churches are now simply standard American Protestant churches, and native ceremonies have disappeared. Cherokee attachment to the land is still fairly strong among some, but few view the land as a Holy Land in these times. And Cherokee sacred history is fast being forgotten.

The school system has been a major factor in this change. The school systems of all large nations not only teach "facts" to students, but also prepare the student to enter the national society as a standardized, individual citizen. Of course, certain values and attitudes are passed on to the student as part of his preparation

to enter into national society. Such values and attitudes do not help small national groups survive, but serve the ends of the state. For instance, some Cherokees nowadays think the use of the Cherokee language is "old-fashioned," while English is "modern;" or that Cherokee religious ideas are "superstitious." Some minority peoples counter this feature of the school system by firm control of local schools, by special teaching in the home, or by extra instruction for children in their religious institutions.

If trends continue as they are it would be my prediction, as a social scientist, that the North Carolina Cherokee will not last more than seventy years longer as a distinct people. The same is true of many other North American groups. Some peoples of the world have been able to reverse such kinds of trends, but to do so takes a strong commitment among the whole people (it cannot be done by specialists alone) and a real attempt to revive important aspects of life. However, these trends cannot be reversed after a certain point. A people must act early in the decay of their peoplehood if they want to reverse such trends.

It is not my job, as a scientist, to tell individuals or communities what is good for them, how to live their lives, or what should be their destiny. (In this case, I have my own private opinion as an Indian.) However, I do feel it is my duty as a scientist to inform lay persons about scientific thinking which has a direct bearing on their lives

5

THE HORNS OF THE DILEMMA

This article was written for a social work journal which was edited by the author's nephew, Hutke Fields, of Norman, Oklahoma

A people's culture, their way of life, is more than simply a list of customs and practices; and it is not just an ideological commitment alone. Culture is a way of seeing and a way of being. There are many different American Indian "tribes," small nationalities or peoples, and each has a distinct and unique culture. But they share many broad cultural notions that contrast with the values of the general American society.

American whites define the general culture. As a whole, they put a premium on the acquisition, by the individual, of social rank, power, and money; and the resultant acquiring of prestige and influence. Most American Indians, on the other hand, are judged by their fellows on how much they give to and share with relatives and neighbors, and on the amount and quality of service to their community. Some Indians might be forced to move away from kith and kin because of dire economic straits, but few would

leave "home" permanently in order to pursue social rank only.

America has many different minority peoples with distinct cultures in her midst - the Amish of the Middle West, the Cajuns of Louisiana, the Spanish speakers of northern New Mexico, and on and on. Most of them seem able to come to terms with the general culture and remain culturally unique as well.

But American Indians have a difficult time with just such a situation. The reason lies in another Indian value. Of all the peoples of the world, American Indians most protect the integrity of the person. It is inviolate. Indians simply do not intrude in on the other person, adult or child. They do not give instructions, unsolicited advice, or orders. "It's up to them," is probably the most widely used phrase in Indian conversation. In days past, Indian children were socialized by listening; by observing; by participating; by paying close attention to relatives, especially elders; and by learning an unquestioned body of traditional guides which were sanctioned by an Indian religion

All of this means that in the modern environment an Indian child is very responsive to outside influences which do not mind intruding in on his personhood. Indian children are, like other children, in school some eight hours a day, five days a week, nine months of the year. They may be involved in after-school supervised activity as well. They spend most of their day in an environment which actively promulgates values like the acquisition of individual social rank. If these children watch television, their "kids" programs reinforce the values of their white school peers. Indian parents who value the personal integrity of their children are thus playing in a losing game. Their children are being socialized by white institutions, and being taught (seduced?) by white American values.

If things continue as they are, the future of our children may be either "skid row", or the American working class where they can work at boring, demeaning jobs, and dull the pain of life with smoking "pot." More, the quality of life in many Indian communities is deteriorating badly - heavy drinking, crime, etc. - as it is in many non-Indian groups. In most places Indians seem caught between the specter of assimilation into a decaying society (social and cultural death), or life in a socially chaotic community.

I believe that Indians have only one reasonable choice and that is to strengthen our local communities: revise and strengthen our religions and the tribal body of tradition; develop some new social controls with "teeth" in them; require that schools meet our needs or start our own schools; start working together again and revive our own charitable institutions; throw out our television sets or else force television stations to have shows for kids in Indian languages dealing with Indian life, and so on.

The general American society is in very serious trouble - economically, socially,

psychologically, etc. Those in the helping professions who deal with Indians should keep that firmly in mind. They should forget bromides and pat solutions like "assimilation" or "adjustment." They need to be helpers - not directors. With their support Indians could rebuild their families and communities and have a good life once again.

6

THE NEW SACRED NATIONALISM

This paper was presented at a conference of primarily Indian academics and Indian elders in the late 1970s. The conference was held in Claremore, Oklahoma and sponsored by Kenneth Fink of the Indian Studies Program of Claremore College.

The focus of this conference is issues and events for Indians in the '80s. What I would like to talk about is a world-wide trend that I see today and which I think will profoundly effect North American Indians. That trend is a general revolt in the world against secularity, against a life without sacred meaning and religious sanction.

Now I'm an anthropologist by profession, so this will be an anthropological discussion. I'm not well trained in religion and philosophy as is Dr. Couture, so my presentation will probably be a little more of a "meat and potatoes" presentation.

First, let me assess for you what I think the North American Indian scene looks like now. In the last thirty-five years there have been massive changes in the life of North American Indian tribes. One of the most prominent changes has been a tremendous native language loss. The areas of North America where you see this loss particularly are in the northern United States and southern Canada, the West Coast, and western Oklahoma. In other words, the biggest part of Indian North America. For instance, where I live in Michigan I think you would have a hard time finding anyone under forty years of age who spoke an Indian language fluently - Pottawatomie, Chippewa, or Ottawa. I think that in another thirty years Chippewa will be gone in Wisconsin, and in another forty years it will be gone in Minnesota. I think it's very hard now in western Oklahoma, except among the Cheyenne, to find anyone under thirty who speaks an Indian language. This language loss has taken place within thirty-five years, really since World War II. In my lifetime I have seen that change and I do not think it bodes well for the future of those tribes. It may be possible to maintain a peoplehood without a distinct language, but in the United States I think survival is chancy if you give up your native language.

The second change is that in a great many areas Indian religious patterns have

fallen into disuse, and in a great many tribes there are, in fact, no more Indian doctors. I'm amazed at the number of Indian communities in North America in which Indian doctors are old and have no pupils. More startling are the tribes in which there are no native healers at all. I have lived in western Oklahoma, and I know quite a number of tribes there that have no Indian doctors at all. This is true in the Great Lakes area, and it's true on the West Coast

Now those facts in themselves may not be so bad but I think it's symptomatic of the general decay of Indian languages and cultures generally. Some Indian groups have really changed so much that they are almost indistinguishable from the surrounding populations. There are reservations in southern California that for all apparent purposes are Mexican communities. This is true of even a few Pueblos in New Mexico. Most of the Pueblos are very conservative traditional Indians. But there are some Pueblos who have, within the last forty years, become so Mexicanized in language and behavior generally as to be almost indistinguishable from neighboring Mexican communities. There are reservations in the Great Lakes area that really resemble assimilated French communities more than they do Indian communities. There are legal Indian tribes in Oklahoma that are white American socially, linguistically, and culturally.

Beyond this, there are a great many Indian communities who are in very bad social trouble, with high rates of alcoholism, high rates of family breakdown and so forth. This is less true in Oklahoma and northern California than in most places in North America. But in some tribes the rate of alcoholism and family breakdown is staggering. Now this portrait doesn't look too good and I am deliberately selecting out those aspects of North American Indian life which don't look too good.

Another massive change is that today 45% of all Indians live in urban centers. I live in the metropolitan Detroit area myself. There is very little of an Indian community in most cities. There are Indians living in cities and there are Indian centers in cities - and you see some Indians involved with Indian centers. But they are a minority of the Indians who live there. Most Indians who live in American cities do not have much contact with other Indians. There is now a whole generation of Indians who have been born, raised, and socialized in the city - Indians who have spent most of their waking hours in schools away from other Indians and instead associating with members of other groups of people. One would have a very hard time, in terms of behavior and outlook, in distinguishing a great many city Indians from most other people born in American cities. A great many city-raised Indians are not distinctively Indian in the way that they behave or the way that they think about things. Of course, I'm speaking generally. There are Indians raised in cities who are still very much Indian, but I think as a whole this is not the case.

Further, American Indians now living in cities (almost half of all Indians) have an out-marriage rate of 40%; that is to say, 40% of all these people who identify themselves

as Indians and are living in American cities are married to non-Indians. Now, I think that you can have out-marriage under some conditions without endangering your social life or your social existence. However, when you live in a city and you marry another group of people I think that the chances are that your children will be very far removed from Indian life. That isn't always the case. But a 40% out-marriage rate is phenomenally high. Usually when you see a rate that high it generally means that the group you are looking at are on their way out as a distinct group; that is, they have no social cohesion.

Now I would submit to you that the "cause" of this social erosion has been the rise of the secular life and a decline of the sacred among North American Indians. In order to demonstrate my point let me tell you what I think a sacred life is; that is, what is the old time Indian world?

I think there are two main aspects of this sacred world. One is that for tribal Indians in North American in times past, and for many today, that world "out there" that is called in English "nature," is alive and is filled with supernatural meaning. It is integrated in with your own life. One is an integral part of that world out there. And it is personal and particular. For the old time Indian those items out there, that tree, isn't just a potential post. That tree is God's creation, the same as you. It has a right to be growing there and to be treated with respect. Even if you chop it down for wood and take it's life you know that it isn't just an object. You may need that wood to keep warm, but you don't have the right to treat "beings" in that world out there in an off-hand manner. In that old time Indian world the "items" of that world "out there" are as worthy of respect as you are. They are as alive as you are. They are filled with supernatural meaning. It was to that "natural" world that the old time Indian looked for guides to life; the way a bird flew in the morning as one walked out of the house, the way a certain stone by the path looked as one walked along and one's eye was caught by it. All this told you something and gave you guides and messages because it was a world full of supernatural meaning. A friend of mine, Ernest Tootoosis, said, "In the old days before the whites came the Indians didn't have the Bible but they didn't really need it, because they had God's handiwork to look to and to read."

I'm not sure in my mind if Indians can exist as city people. The city really cuts one off from that "natural" world. Can the Indian's sacred world continue in a world full of concrete and automobiles?

Finally, one must continually strive for good feelings and harmony with the "beings" of that natural world. So much for the first aspect of the Indian sacred world.

The second aspect of this sacred world is that, over the years, as an Indian tribe lives in a particular environment it builds up a body of experience with that natural world, knowledge about how to "get along" with that natural world and about how to get along with one another in that environment. We call this "tradition" in the West.

That body of human experience called tradition is what I think Joe Couture means by "the law." Now, the law, as Indians saw it, pervaded all of life. You couldn't plant nor hunt without going through certain sacred rituals. There wasn't an item or action in your life that wasn't regulated by the Creator's law. Every social institution was based on the Creator's law.

For instance, in the old days the Indians had chiefs. In most tribes chiefs came about by one or two processes; one, they became chiefs because they were in an appropriate family line that, according to tradition, God had appointed in the beginning to be responsible for the welfare of the people. Now that didn't mean that a congenital idiot could be chief, but the family or clan was important. In some other tribes chiefs were selected largely by divination by holy people (priests), but all were sanctioned by God. My mother recently said, "The Indians won't listen to anybody unless they believe God chose him."

Think about what it means to impose secular government on a people who need such kinds of religious and sacred sanction in all of life. No wonder tribal governments are always in difficulty and have little support from the "grass roots." Even though in some Indian tribes that religious and sacred sanction is no longer there, it doesn't mean Indians don't have a need for that kind of religious sanction. They do!

But the secular world is not just an absence of the sacred. Something else happens when you become secular. A secular world is a deadened world. It is a world which is not alive. It is a world of objects. So that in fact that tree "out there" is a potential fence post. That's a secular world. It's a world of objects. And western civilization has gone through a long history of making larger and larger sections of life deadened objects. First, Westerners made the natural world a world of objects. Then they made their social institutions objects, as no longer from God but "things" which they could create. In fact, if you can create something out of your own mind that is a secular act.

And Westerners have finally come to see even social institutions as "things", secular. Law is secular. Law is the wisest decisions that men in the secular west at this time can come to about how to regulate behavior among each other. That kind of law is not something grounded in the sacred and religious.

Finally, as you know, religion has been relegated to Sunday morning for most people in western civilizations. It doesn't carry over beyond Sunday for most people. Needless to say, I'm speaking about the extreme. I'm really speaking about places like Detroit, New York, London, and the West Coast; places of real urban development.

This secularity means that the individual is thrown on his own resources. There is nothing out there to look at if you live in a deadened world. You are thrown on your own resources, so you must make rational decisions about how to proceed among alternatives, given the facts at hand. That's the way that you perceive.

People who live in the secular world, who are thrown on their own resources, tend to see the good life as one of more and more choices. The more choices you have, and the fewer things are fixed and given, the better. In fact, there is a trend in the United States now called the Women's Liberation Movement, which most of you know about. Some women who are involved in this even see their own biology as unfair, as not giving them a choice. I have heard some women say, "Why do women have to have babies and men don't?" What they mean is that having babies isn't in the realm of choice, that it's a given because of their biology.

Western civilization has finally gotten to the point where almost everything must be a choice, nothing can be fixed and given. I think that the end result of that trend in western civilization is corrupt business practices, Watergate, child abuse in the suburbs, pornography all over the cities; giving people the ultimate choice to do as they so choose in life. I do not think that a moral system can sustain itself under those conditions (I'm speaking now as a scientist) and what you will finally get is amorality; not an immorality but a world in which morality is not relevant to anything. If you listen to the Watergate tapes you will not hear about a world that is immoral but instead you will hear about a world in which moral decisions are not relevant to anything. There are no moral values there.

Among Indians I think secularity has been disastrous. I think the language loss I've been talking about, the family troubles, etc. are the result of Indians trying to embrace the secular world. I don't think Indians as human personalities can operate successfully in a secular world. I think Indians as people need a sacred world. Indians need guides outside of themselves that are sacred and sanctioned; controls outside of themselves. If there is nothing outside that's sanctioned by God for Indians to look to, they'll look to the TV, they'll look to the schools, they'll look for pleasure-seeking activities, any stimulus in the "outside." Now the reason I am convinced, as a scientist, that this is true is because I have seen situations in which there have been this kind of social breakdown that I am talking about, due to the rise of secularity, and I have also seen the results when such a trend reverses itself.

I have a friend of mine called Joe Mackinaw. Joe and his family lived at a place called Hobema, Alberta in the 1960s. Hobema is made up of four bands of Plains Cree Indians, four small reserves close together. The Hobema Cree are awfully nice people but they are in very, very bad social trouble - drinking, drunken car wrecks, family troubles. You can hardly get a night's sleep in Hobema, Alberta. Joe Mackinaw told me, "I knew that if I didn't leave there and go to a clean place in the mountains with my

family that I would have no family soon - that my sons would be either alcoholics or in prison or killed in a car wreck or something." So he took his family and when to a "clean place" in the mountains. He said that he was going some place to worship and to live as God meant for the Indians to live. The Mackinaw family does live out there in the mountains now. They hunt for a living now. They are close to nature as their fathers once were. They have a reconstituted sacred world. And the drinking has stopped and the trouble has stopped and they lead a good life now - in the mountains. That is why, as a scientist, I'm convinced that secularity is basically the source of the difficulty for Indians.

I think that a great many people in the world today are coming to Joe Mackinaw's conclusion - even in the United States. I think there is a trend in the United States now for, if not a reconstitution of the sacred world, at least a little more attention to religious morality. I think many people are offended by pornography now in the United States. I think a great many people of an ethnic Catholic background are offended by abortion laws and so forth. I think even in the United States there is some trend now against the purely secular world of absolute choice. In other parts of the world I think this has become an extreme issue and that people are reacting very violently against secularity.

One of the places acting very violently against the secular world is, of course, the Near East. There is an idea now called Islamic Socialism which is sweeping the Near East. Presumably it is a kind of socialism built on the principles of Islam, with a government controlled by sacred leaders who worry about whether governmental acts are consistent with the principles of Islam. Now, as you know, the main spokesman for this trend is the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, a man not too popular right now in the United States, but nevertheless the symbolic leader of this movement in the Middle East. I predict that this trend will sweep the whole Middle East. For instance, members of the royal family of Saudi Arabia go to Paris and drink like fish and do all the things that Islam tells you is sinful. I don't think the Saudi royal family will make it. I think the next country to go to the Islamic revolution will probably be Saudi Arabia. I think that is going to be bad news for our oil supply, but I think this is a trend all over the Middle East.

In Africa all of the leaders I personally know anything about have for years had personal spiritual advisors; that is, advisors from the great secret societies of Africa, the spiritual leaders of the native African religions. Now, no African says anything about that because Africans know that Europeans and Americans would think that to be "superstition." However, I expect very soon that such informal bodies will become formal; they will be formally recognized. I see this trend also in Latin America.

I think the other great spokesman for this reaction against the secular is Pope John Paul II. John Paul has said over and over again that as he looks around the world he sees

not one political philosophy which is not based in materialism and which is not anti-spiritual. I think anti-secularity will soon sweep large parts of Latin America. I think that John Paul has sanctioned such thinking in Latin America. I don't think there are going to be very many more secular revolutions in the Indian countries of Latin America.

This anti-secular trend is fast becoming very important in the world and I think it will have a tremendous impact on North American Indians. In what way this will have an impact I'm not, at this point, able to say. However, I cannot imagine that it will not have some impact. And I mean a real impact.

So far I have heard a lot of talk among North American Indians about reviving Indian ways, culture, and religion. But I haven't seen too much action. It's been more talk than action. However, if this new trend comes to a head, as I think it will in the world, it will have a very profound effect on North American Indians. Because then people who have the influence in Indian communities to revive Indian religion, and so forth, will step forward. As it is now I think it's mostly marginal people in Indian communities who have been interested in spiritual revival. But if this anti-secular trend matures and has an impact on North American Indians, the most influential leaders in local Indian communities will be very heavily effected by it.

7

POSITION PAPER ON TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

Written in May, 1986, for a conference on tribal government sponsored by NAES College, an Indian college in Chicago.

Introduction

In simplistic terms, the structure of Indian governments before the invasion of North America by Europeans consisted of chiefs, and elders representing kin groups. In the southern tribes, this body was a formal priesthood as well. The band or the village was the locus of the most important decisions.

Political decisions were of two kinds. One were those decisions proscribed by tradition. Chiefs and elders "reminded" the people of those traditional proscriptions, usually in public assembly, and then supervised the carrying out of the appropriate action. The second kind of decisions were those which, where traditions were not explicit, were made by an open assembly. The chiefs and elders acted to help achieve unanimity. If a minority felt strongly about their position the issue was put aside,

or else the minority withdrew and formed another social body.

Warfare was not usually a political decision, in the above sense, and was most times carried out by an individual war leader and his followers. The exception was when the whole tribe committed itself to war. In this case, the chief and elders put the issue to the tribal assembly, as they did when making peace with an enemy people. Great care was taken in aboriginal Indian government to protect the wishes, autonomy, dignity, and integrity of each individual. This type of government was admirably suited to small kin-communities. (And, of course, Indian tribes are yet based on small kin-communities.)

In the early 1800s several tribes undertook to reform their original governments and finally to adopt a republican form of government modeled after that of the United States. The motivation behind such a move was to centralize the tribal government and so curtail the power of local chiefs, many of whom were busily signing away lands to the U.S.; to better deal with the social chaos prevalent in their tribes; and to have a formal, stable institutional structure. However, this was not accomplished overnight. The Cherokee tribe took over thirty years to complete this reform. For instance, some six successive legislative acts were needed to modify and finally abolish the principle of clan revenge. But no Cherokees imagined that this legal reform did away with the sentiment involved in clan revenge, so extra-legal procedures grew up to handle this sentiment - no one belonging to the clan of the victim or the accused could sit on a jury in a murder trial, the relatives of the victim had the option of forming the firing squad which executed the convicted murderer, and so on. This process of reform and adaptations around reform went on for some thirty years, at which time the Cherokees adopted a constitution; simply codifying reforms already in practice, as is the case with most constitutions (included the American constitution!)

6. The Problem of Legitimacy and Cultural Fit

Now, let me contrast the above process with what went on in the 1930s at the time modern tribal governments arose. To begin with, by 1930 most tribes had lived on reservations for several generations under the absolute control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Most of their native institutions had decayed and disappeared - military, police, educational, economic, etc. Government usually consisted of the local agent assembling the chiefs or a hand-picked committee and instructing them in what he had decided. Now comes "democracy," usually in the form of the Indian Reorganization Act, to Indian reservations in the 1930s. Indians on most reservations did not react positively. Since the I.R.A. was now "policy" from Washington, the local agents on many reservations simply "rammed" it down the tribe's throat in spite of opposition by the chiefs and a majority of the tribe. A small minority of voters adopted the Indian Reorganization Act on most reservations. The majority was either apathetic or, in most cases, actively disapproved by not participating in the matter at all. (Boycott by Indians is a positive political action in nearly all tribes.)

Shortly after the adoption of the I.R.A. by a tribe, the B.I.A. wheeled in a standard, bare-bones, Anglo-style constitution (along with the same style legal code) which was once again adopted by a small minority voting in most tribes. Many tribes are still stuck with these embarrassingly inadequate documents which were simply dropped into their midst in the 1930s.

Thus, modern tribal governments did not have the sanction of chiefs or the Indian majority. That problem of legitimacy remains. It is less severe in tribes like Papago and Navaho, and most severe among peoples like the Hopi and Oglala Sioux.

Further, tribes were not allowed the time to evolve and adapt a republican, representative type government. It was simply dropped on their heads. Thus, the legal mechanisms of such a government - secret ballot, individual voting, majority rule, geographic representation, etc. - remain uncongenial to most Indians; as is the preemption of the local band or village by such a structure.

The legal systems of most tribes suffer even more from a lack of cultural fit. The native system of law has never been taken into account on most reservations; nor is there a conscious cultivation of Indian common law or attention to court precedents. In fact, some tribal councils see the tribal courts simply as their agents of social control only.

7. Colonialism

In the 1960s I wrote an article in which I characterized the relationship between the federal government and Indian tribes as colonial; that is to say, that outside bureaucrats of a powerful, alien society and culture controlled the lives of Indians. I have seen nothing since the 1960s which has changed my mind. The trust responsibility and the plenary power of Congress clearly establishes where the power lays. I am at a loss to understand what modern discussions of self-determination and sovereignty mean in such a legal context. I know of no political unit in the U.S. other than Indian tribes which must have the majority of their decisions approved by a federal official (the Secretary of Interior), or which cannot try major crimes in their courts because of an act of Congress. The control by the federal government of the "purse strings" on reservations contributes to the powerlessness of tribal governments as well. In fact, as late as the mid-60s an Undersecretary of Interior stated to me that "tribal governments were never conceived of as anything but the internal arm of the Bureau within the Indian tribes." Though obscured by the growth of tribal bureaucracy in the seventies, tribal government is still fairly powerless.

In the past, most tribal governments have been able to function successfully to protect the tribe from outside exploitation, and to be a buffer against B.I.A. proposed

cultural change by stalling and subverting. That tribal governments are able to perform their functions so well is a tribute to the political acumen and loyalty of Indian politicians. In fact, given the "heritage" of tribal governments discussed in Section I of this paper, and the colonial situation, it is amazing that tribal politicians can operate as well as they do. As a whole, they do a very difficult job well.

However, even today tribal governments cannot effectively set policy and govern. And tribal politicians are rarely able to deliver on their campaign promises. But the Indian public is never told why this is - the limitations of outside power on tribal leaders. Therefore, there is considerable turnover in tribal government.

More, the one demand that tribal government has not been able to "field" is the pressure by the federal government for economic planning. For quite a number of years tribal government has been involved in economic development. Most of this development has been pointed toward an increase in individual income, on the advice of government employees and academics from the local "Jerkwater U." Such programs have seriously weakened the Indian family and community, as has been the case in all societies where such an approach has been tried in economic planning.

8. The New Indirect Colonialism

Since 1970 this "raw" colonialism has been obscured by the transfer of service functions from the Bureau to the states and tribal governments. In the case of transfer to the state, the state has assumed both the function and the decision-making power, but in the case of the transfers to the "tribe," the "tribe" has taken over administration, but decision-making power has remained in Washington.

However, this new "self-determination" policy did allow tribal governments to create jobs for their members, even if it did mean that now Indians were taking the heat from a resentful Indian public. Many of these new Indian bureaucrats uncritically helped build tribal bureaucratic programs - welfare, housing, old age homes, etc. - which, because "help" focused on the individual, further weakened Indian families in the same way they have weakened family and community in the general society.

Since 1970 tribal jobs have been the motor of the economy on most Indian reservations. That economy has suffered recently because of the Reagan budget cuts. And although this new economy has not given a tribe more governmental power in relation to the federal government it has given the institution of tribal government more power over local Indians. Some Indian politicians have built political patronage machines now and a few resemble a tin pot dictator in a banana republic. (And there is no party machinery to control such excesses.)

The change in the nature of tribal government is making it harder for tribes to stand against outside exploitation and corruption. The local demand for tribal jobs seems insatiable, and Indian politicians must deliver such jobs if he or she is to stay in office. If budget cuts on the part of the federal government increase, what will tribal governments do? Propose local taxation? Sell off resources? Go out of business?

9. The Ultimate Problem

Most people of the world see government as a way to bring about a desired human end - social justice, or economic equality, or individual freedom, or control of our vices and the fostering of our humanity, and so on. I hear few of these things discussed by Indians, in or out of tribal government. What is the purpose of our tribal governments? What kind of relationships in our communities does tribal government help create? What kind of life in our communities do we want for our grandchildren, and how can tribal government help achieve that goal? These are the important questions about government, not concerns with efficiency or costs.

I hear Indians say that we want to preserve our values. Are our values reflected in tribal governments? Do tribal governments not only reflect but cultivate our values? And if not, why not? I do not think that we can be satisfied with the spectre of Indian police units that look and act like 1940-style German S.S. squads. Do we have to model after the worst features of American society, a society in evident decay and decline? How can we take into our own hands the control of our destiny?

Right now there are sixty-year-old full-blood Indians moving away from reservations where they have lived their entire lives because the quality of life there has deteriorated past the point of no return. I think we need to take that fact very seriously.

The American dream of perfecting a political democracy and a just society may have indeed been replaced by modern gross materialism, but that original dream was a great dream, nonetheless. And the American founding fathers were great dreamers. They were thinkers and writers as well as politicians. At this point in history, I think that we Indians desperately need such kinds of men and women. I would suggest that those Indians involved in tribal government begin to ponder, develop, and speak and write about our dreams to us, the Indian public. (Perhaps such a course of action might even goad Indian academics into writing to their fellow Indians, as well.) We need some founding fathers in these days.

Conclusion

Let me conclude this evaluation of tribal government on a positive note. There are some who have concluded that Indian governments are simply puppet governments of no use to Indians except as possible mediators between us and the central government,

and/or as a buffer against outsiders. I do not share that attitude primarily because I am impressed by the Indians in tribal government. As a whole, they are extremely talented and committed people. The elitists and tyrants among them are few. Their integrity is remarkable. Given conditions, there is much, much less corruption in tribal governments than one would expect.

Such people could be more to us than simply needed politicians and administrators. They could be of more and greater value to us in these times. They could indeed be our real leaders and serve an important mission. This is the reason that I have suggested that they become our "founding fathers".

8

DISABILITIES OF MODERN TRIBAL GOVERNMENT

1. Such governments conflict with already existing governmental institutions in many tribes - village priesthoods among the Hopi, "hereditary" band chiefs among Oglala Sioux, etc. Its origin (in the 1930s in most tribes) is recent and was unsanctioned by any mechanism; the majority in most tribes did not vote in the elections for adoption of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) by their tribe.

2. The political mechanisms in most tribal governments are urban Euro-American in origin and cause strife and tension among the members of many tribes - secret individual ballot rather than open discussion with fellow kinsmen, majority rule rather than consensus, territorial representation rather than representation by kin group, community, etc.

3. Most modern tribal governments are not seen by tribal members as decision making apparatuses. They do not hold legitimized authority. They are lacking religious sanction, which means no sanction. At best they are seen as a buffer institution between "the people" and white authorities, as a mechanism to "get something (from whites) for the Indians," as information gathering bodies (information about white intentions towards Indians), and the like. At worst, such governments are viewed as the French and Norwegians viewed Nazi occupation-sponsored regimes, the Vichy and Quisling governments; and further, see Indians associated with such regimes as traitors.

4. Most tribal governments, by law, have little power and few funds except what is allowed by the federal government. This means --

a. that tribal governments function largely as an extension of the federal bureaucracy, the arm of the federal government internal to the tribe. Thus, an

important function of tribal government is to sanction, in the name of their tribe, the actions of the powerful toward them;

b. that since tribal officials are answerable to powerful outsiders and not to their "constituents." irresponsibility and corruption naturally develop from such a situation;

c. that the basic relationship between the federal government and Indian tribes is best described by the term "neo-colonial" and resembles an analogous situation in the Soviet Union. Thus, an organization like CERT (Consortium of Resource Tribes) can emerge on the Indian scene.

5. Tribal governments, in common with other bureaucracies, pre-empt functions from the local community -- CETA workers who cut wood for the elderly, Aid to Dependent Children, old age homes, public housing, etc.

Further, relationships become more and more bureaucratized in Indian tribes. More and more Indians meet now as fellow bureaucrats or as bureaucrat-to-client rather than as kinsman-to-kinsman. Bureaucracy, by its nature, is anti-family and anti-community and tends to massify and individuate.

6. The "self-determination" policy transfers no power, but simply transfers functions to tribal government by the "contract services" route. Now the onus is lifted from white federal bureaucrats and laid on Indians in tribal "jobs." Thus, the heat is off whites, but no power has shifted. Structurally, this system resembles the vast native bureaucracy in India just prior to "independence." Further, all the above listed disabilities are simply compounded by this new growth in function without increase in political power of tribal governments.

Robert Dumont recently said, "When I was a boy it was white people we hated because of the daily indignities we suffered at their hands. Now we are starting to hate our kinsmen who hold these same jobs presently and do these same things to us."

7. Tribal government, by its nature, has a tendency to create an Indian elite class who slowly merge into the comparable class level of the general society. They become general middle class Americans in culture, association, identification, and allegiance.

The above disabilities are modified or heightened by the aboriginal culture of a tribe, its particular history vis-a-vis whites, the region in which it is located, the size of the group, its resource base, its social creative ability, etc.

The Mescalero, for instance, by a combination of lucky circumstances and social

creativity, appear to have minimized the disabilities of tribal government as well as having achieved some degree of autonomy.

9

NEXT STEP, SOCIAL OBLIVION?

This paper was written in the mid-'80s for, and circulated to, a group of twenty or so Indian scholars - academics, former students, activists, etc.

This short position paper will consider three questions. First, what are the social and cultural consequences of language loss among North American Indian groups? Second, what is being done to counter this massive language loss? And thirdly, what are some of the tactics we might employ to counter such language loss, if indeed we think it is a problem? Hopefully, this paper will convince the reader that language loss for North American Indians is a very serious problem.

Several years ago Wallace Chafe of the Smithsonian Institution made an assessment of the "health" of Native American languages. The result of his survey was appalling, to say the least. Language loss among North American Indian tribal groups was staggering. Some fifteen years have passed since Chafe's survey and so far as one can ascertain, language loss has continued at a rapid rate. Thus, the modern situation is even more dire than Chafe's research indicated some fifteen years ago.

Anyone acquainted with American Indian groups knows very well that native languages are almost gone in large areas of North America; such areas as the West Coast, the Great Lakes region, western Oklahoma, and so on. Even in areas where Indian languages are intact - eastern Oklahoma, the Southwest, and some parts of the Great Basin and Plateau areas - native languages, if not on the verge of extinction, are eroded to some degree. Now what does all this mean for the social and cultural survival of North American Indian groups?

First, let us take social survival. For some North American Indian groups the native language is the most important symbol of collective identity, a symbol which functions to preserve the group. In most places if it is not the symbol, the native language is at least an important symbol of collective identity, so that when a native language "goes," minimally an important symbol of collective identity usually goes with it. This, of course, lessens the chances of social survival for a hard-pressed minority people, and most North American Indian groups are certainly hard-pressed minority

peoples.

In some areas, the native language has functioned as a boundary maintaining device; that is to say, the use of the native language determines who is a member of the group and who is not. Among other Indian peoples, the native language has functioned further to keep important areas of life and culture hidden from the culturally imperialistic eyes of Euro-Americans. In such tribes this kind of "secrecy" is an important psychological factor which contributes to group survival. To recapitulate; in many groups the native language has functioned as an important collective identity symbol, as a boundary maintaining mechanism, and as a way to preserve important life areas.

There can also be indirect damage to other important cultural symbols as the native language disappears. In some North American Indian groups - Iroquois, Mesquakie, Choctaw, etc. - the native religion or else a native Christianity is the major collective identity symbol. However, if the native language disappears in such tribes it will be almost impossible to preserve the native religion. In the case of a native Christianity, such a religious pattern would very quickly become a standard Christianity, not a native Christianity, and therefore could not function as a collective identity symbol. In conclusion, one could say minimally that in most tribes the native language has functioned and now functions as an important mechanism to help insure social survival and that without the native language some groups would be hard put to continue as unique and distinct peoples in 20th century America.

However, even if an Indian group survived socially there would be considerable cultural loss. One can argue with the Whorfian hypothesis which postulates that the very thinking of a group is embedded in language structure. This hypothesis has yet to be proven or disproven by research. However, most scholars would agree that a great deal of the unique culture of any people is contained in the concepts of their language. There is no doubt, in that sense at least, that language is a primary cultural vehicle so that loss of a native language means a significant cultural loss. Many Indian groups without their native languages would simply become Brown Americans, as people of African descent have become Black Americans.

The third consequence of language loss by North American Indian tribes in the American milieu is that if English becomes the language of an Indian group, most groups will lose any chance for separate intellectual autonomy. They will simply become, as have many working class Americans, creations of the media, particularly TV, and of an educational system which provides people with slogans and bromides to meet situations rather than developing independent analytic ability. If one looks at most of the working class in American cities today, one could almost come to the conclusion that they are the creation of a media and an educational system which has created them to work, consume, fight wars and sanction "the system" but certainly not to do any independent thinking.

Further, not only is the chance of independent intellectual autonomy precluded by language loss, but in the nature of the case there is no chance for the development of an independent literary tradition. Even if a people survives the loss of their native language, there is a strong possibility that they will become simply a low status American variant.

Now, having painted this rather bleak picture, it behooves one to ask that, if the situation is as serious as it is painted above, what is being done to deal with this massive language loss; a condition which is both endangering the possibility of survival and at minimum bringing about cultural decay?

Well, it appears that not much is being done! Most of what are called bilingual efforts among North American Indians could better be termed language recovery attempts. These language recovery attempts have been sponsored by Title IV of the Indian Education Act and resemble traditional language courses, primarily for the lower grades. By and large, these courses are simply language appreciation courses; that is to say, the child learns how to count or to say simple phrases or to develop a limited vocabulary but no ability to speak or to "handle" the language. In most such schools the students speak English on the playground, as well as in the family context and among their peer group.

It does not seem that these language recovery attempts have even slowed language erosion in those places where the native language is relatively functional. In those areas where the native language is gone or almost gone, these attempts have not revived it. At worst, such programs have trivialized American Indian languages, making Indian languages the domain of small children. Further, there has been very little promotion of native research to develop functional and socially sanctioned native language writing systems, much less a body of literature. To summarize, language recovery attempts on the part of school systems have simply had little positive effect in most places and in a few places have had a negative effect.

If this analysis is correct, then we need a whole new approach to language recovery and/or the slowing of language erosion. We might very well consider some complete immersion programs in the style of the Berlitz programs. If the Berlitz language schools can teach white suburban housewives the basis of functional French or Spanish in six days, then one should be able to do the same for Indian languages in a couple of weeks. However, such programs would necessitate some significant community involvement. One cannot revive a language or slow the loss of a language if English continues to be the functional language of the home and public events. One of the difficulties at the present time is that the majority of these "bilingual programs" are the exclusive domain of the school, almost completely without community involvement. Many times Indian communities are not aware of what the school is trying to do, and if they are aware, they are willing to leave those matters in the hands of the school. They look to the school to single-handedly do the job of language recovery or the slowing of

language loss; a task which can only be done by a major concerted effort on the part of both the school and the family.

It is unlikely that even complete immersion programs will bring about language recovery in these groups in which the native language has almost disappeared. However, these complete immersion programs with community involvement might at least slow language loss in those communities in which the native language is still functional to a degree.

For those communities in which the native language is not functional then the development of a class of language specialists in the style of American Jews may be the best those tribes can do at this point in history. It might be possible to create a class of language specialists who could maintain an intellectual tradition and a native religion in such tribes. One might also be able to give the Indian children of these tribes some acquaintance with the native language so they could participate meaningfully in ceremonies, in the way that Jewish children and lay adults are able to participate in Jewish religious services.

Then, after Indian languages are fairly secure we might turn our attention toward the development of independent literary traditions in order to strengthen Indian cultures and Indian chances for survival.

10

LETTER TO MS. NASH

This letter was written in May of 1983 as a supplement to a keynote address on Cherokee history given earlier that year in Cherokee, North Carolina

Dear Ms. Nash,

I want to thank you very much for your helpful comments about my talk at Cherokee last month. After reflecting on some of the things that you told me I can see that I did not make myself as clear as I should have. So let me recapitulate my argument for you.

To begin with, I said that the modern school is an uncongenial and strange learning environment for those children who live as part of kin groups and close-knit communities, particularly for most American Indian children. Their home life contrasts

quite strongly with the school in this regard. It takes most such children quite a while, if ever, to become accustomed to the learning environment of school.

Those characteristics of the school learning environment which contrast most markedly with their home situation are as follows:

1) personal: the characteristics of a personal relation is that it is a) wholistic - that is, the person in all their aspects is related to; b) unique - there is no one quite like the person you are relating to; c) particular - one takes into account the particular circumstances of the other; d) familiar - one knows the other well; e) emotive - the relation takes place in a context of love or dislike and content is emotively communicated; f) definitive - the other person tells one who they are and what they are worth, establishes one's identity and self-worth. Only a kin or friendship relationship is personal in the above sense.

Of course, impersonality is just the opposite. It is: a) partial - one does not have to relate to a waitress as a total person to get a meal; b) categorical - a customer is a category, not a unique being; c) general - one waitress as a waitress is very like another; d) unfamiliar - one does not even have to know the waitress' name to order a meal; e) non-definitive - a waitress tells you very little about who you are as a person; f) rational and purposeful - a customer wants the meal and the waitress' only job is to wait on him or her.

Needless to say, the school (and the economic and legal systems as well) weakens the personal ties of families. Children are away from parents at school most of the week and siblings are usually separated from one another in modern schools.

Much of modern life is based on impersonal reciprocal role functions like the teacher-student relationship. When such relations begin to become personal the system breaks down. Most teachers try hard to avoid "favoritism" toward a student they like, or one who is a relative, or the child of a family friend. This does not mean that one cannot be sensitive, perceptive, kind, friendly, considerate, etc. in impersonal relations, but that does alter the fact that they are impersonal relationships.

I think my other characteristics speak for themselves.

2) The isolated individual is the learning unit, not the kin or peer group.

3) Individuals compete with classmates for reward from the system.

18. Learning is regimented. The student does not learn at his own time and pace. The very fact that there are classes at fixed times mitigates against this process.

19. Learning is not done "on the job," such as one following one's uncle when he goes

fishing. Learning is abstract.

I am sure that most Indian teachers, as well as sensitive white teachers, do what they can to help an Indian child cope with such an unfamiliar situation. However, it remains a fact that the school learning environment is created by the very organization of the school as an institution and is largely outside the control of individuals.

Many Indian students, therefore, enter school with a "handicap," as compared to most white, middle class students who are already used to an environment at home which is more like the school environment. Many Indian children, thus, start at a "disadvantage" and remain at a disadvantage, relative to white middle-class students.

I have not done any educational research since the late sixties, but it is clear that the characteristics I have outlined above have accentuated over the years in the school systems - larger schools, larger classes, more emphasis on educational techniques in education colleges, more centralization of the school as a bureaucracy, etc. That there is a high drop-out rate among Indians, city blacks, country whites, etc. does not surprise me. I am sure that the rate would be much higher if the truancy laws were not better enforced these days, the fact that welfare departments keep an eye on the children of the clients, and a general sentiment among Indian parents today that children should "get an education" (be certified by the educational institutions) so that they can get a good job later in life.

By and large, to be "successful" as an adult in modern American life one must know how to assume a role function in a large, bureaucratic organization - government, factory, etc. Some scholars state that one of the major functions of the modern school is to socialize children so that they can operate in such a milieu as adults. It may be that Indian children have to cease being the kind of people they are and learn another way of being if they are to enter the middle class as adults. If that is true, perhaps schools are as successful in this regard as they can be, given the "material" with which they must work.

Another problem in learning in school which is specific to most Indian children, at least those raised in more traditional Indian families, is that Indians are taught to learn in a holistic way - where one does a lot of pre-conscious learning and then perceives the whole or the pattern almost like a revelation. This is in contrast to step-by-step, part sequence, non-contextual learning which is typical of Euro-American culture and which is the mode of the American school.

As I am sure you are aware, the main point in my presentation was not oriented toward individual learning difficulties. My main point was that all general American institutions, school as an example, tend to ignore the aspirations of Indian groups as peoples, small national groups, and all that that implies - their desire to survive as unique social groups, their aspiration to retain some distinctive cultural traits, their relationship

to the land which is different than any other group in America, etc.

I am sorry to say that it seems to me as a scientist that the future of the eastern Cherokees as a distinct people is in grave doubt. If factors like language loss, cultural loss, intermarriage with whites, etc. continue as they are now, then there will probably be no eastern Cherokee as a people around in a hundred years. They will simply be darker-than-average, southern, country Americans with an interesting heritage.

I am enclosing an article which I intend to have translated into Cherokee and sent around to friends in North Carolina.

Please, pass this letter on to teachers who attended my presentation at Cherokee.

11

IMPEDIMENTS TO ANALYSIS

Written in the mid-'80s for, and circulated to, a group of twenty or so Indian scholars - academics, former students, activists, etc.

For some years now it has been apparent to me that the Indian affairs scene is an intellectual desert. Not only does one never hear any new ideas or analyses, but the bromides eternally repeated over and over by Indians are becoming more and more gross. What is the problem? Obviously, most educated Indians simply repeat the latest desperate lunacy they have heard from powerful whites. One wonders if it is the stupid and the followers of orders among the young Indians who are selected out for "advancement" by the modern American school system. However, the school system hasn't turned all educated Indians into parrots, surely? There must be some bright and independent educated Indians. Recently, I have been considering the general impediments to creative thinking by Indians, over and above the "bone-headedness" created by the school system. In this piece, then, I will talk to what seems to me the impediments to incisive and creative thinking among the later group.

1. Firstly, I think that modern Indians are too affected emotionally by the racial minority status to which we are assigned by American society. And we are indeed becoming more and more of a standard racial minority of American society. Structurally, at least half of the Indians in the U.S. live scattered out among whites, particularly in city areas; for Indians under forty more than half live in this condition, and for certain tribes there are more than half in cities as well. What is even more serious is the fact that we are slowly taking over that above definition of ourselves, along with all of the emotional problems that come with viewing one's self and group as a racial minority of a larger

society - concerns about rank, negative definitions, social acceptance, subtle discrimination, etc. One only has to look at most blacks and middle class Mexicans in order to see what a debilitating condition this is. I remember after World War II when Mexican American "leadership", after years of struggle, finally got the census and individual states to classify Mexicans legally as whites. What an irony! If there is a Mexican community in the U.S. in which the residents are not predominantly of Indian ancestry I would like to see it! What a waste of time and energy! American blacks are obsessed with their acceptance or rejection by whites, even more so. It is clear that school integration is not a solution to educational problems among ghetto blacks. It is only a not very successful and partial solution to the dilemma of rank.

In these days, many Indians are in the above "bag." Magnificent buildings to house tribal government offices mushroom on Indian reservations while most local Indians sink further into poverty. Tribal officials appear in public in \$400 three-piece suits while most Indians walk around with the ass out of their Levi's. Indian history is cleaned up to meet middle class white standards - whites really were the ones who introduced scalping to North America, and Indians never killed white women and children in battle; the Indian religion is just good modern ecological practice spelled backwards, etc. Capitalism is the answer to every Indian problem from alcoholism to governmental inefficiency. The list of the absurd goes on forever! And it all stems primarily from a desire to be accepted by whites. Considerations about rank and image cloud every facet of Indian thinking.

Some of the effects on Indian thinking of this modern Indian view of themselves as members of a low ranked American racial minority is not as obvious as the above example. Another more subtle result of this minority status is that acceptance is desired so much that a blind faith in the "system" is thus created. One sees this particularly in blacks and children of immigrants. Blacks, as a whole, are convinced that the American ideals are attainable for them and that America will finally dispense justice for all; this is in spite of all historical and present evidence to the contrary. Many children of immigrants are super patriots, in the positive sense of the word; contribute and work hard for social causes; and are certain that ultimately America can do no wrong. Modern Indians petition, supplicate, cajole, and protest to the power holders, regardless of the fact that Indian oppression and exploitation continues on unabated in the same basic pattern as it has for the last two hundred years. Only the words we use to mask the process have changed.

Further, a great deal of our time in Indian affairs is taken up "explaining" Indians and the Indian situation to whites. After we get through explaining to one group of whites we can then go on to the next plateau - explaining the same thing to the next group of whites; endlessly and to no avail. How could a society in such deep trouble respond to us, even if they wanted to, when they can't even act in their own behalf? Most of us are stuck in our thinking at the point where Jomo Kenyatta was when he wrote Facing Mt.

Kilimanjaro, an explanation of the Kenyan situation to British liberals and a plea for understanding. (Some "explaining" is probably a necessary and functional tactic in our circumstance. Vine Deloria is our best "explainer" in this regard.)

When petitions, protests, and explanations come to naught many young Indians respond with indignation. Many of my friends walk around half the time bristling with indignation and declaring in an outraged manner some thing like, "Why they don't intend to do right by us!" No-o-o kidding! Then after a while they are right there in line with their pail in hand, trying to get an extra portion of cracked corn from Mr. Charlie.

I must admit that my distaste for American culture and society is probably just as much of a prejudice, in another way, and could be as distorting as a blind faith in America. I try to control this prejudice, and at least I know consciously that it is a prejudice.

Of course, the opposite side of the coin from blind faith is disillusionment and a sense of betrayal. Some of the former militants, especially among blacks, show such a sense of betrayal in the extreme. And such a sense of betrayal can be focussed on one American "institution" in which one had a blind faith at one time - law, politics, churches, a profession, etc. I see this prejudice particularly in Indian friends who are former Christians. In their eyes, churches (national church bureaucracies) can do no right. I am sure that it would be the height of innocence to not take into account that church bureaucracies act like bureaucracies everywhere - protective of their power, responsive to the rich and powerful and most times willing to act for the powerful, etc. And religious ideologues are like ideologues wherever you find them. They couldn't see another human being if one bit them in the leg. But I am sure that church officials were a little more than simply the advance scouts of the colonialists in past times, and more than the modern wing of establishment oppression among Indians. Such a view forecloses any discussion of tactics in the handling of such a powerful force in Indian lives. And although this view of "the churches" may be true, it is not all that's true about the situation. Only the most secular human being could fail to see the depth of spirituality and commitment in Indian Christians, and the strength of local Indian churches as Indian institutions in some tribes. Complicating this sense of betrayal vis-a-vis Christian churches is the fact that the present fad in the Indian identity search is to declare in public unswerving loyalty to the Indian religion while directing a cold glance at Indian Christians. (It is not necessary to, in fact, take part in native ceremonies and practices; only to swear undying loyalty!)

Once again, I must admit to a similar prejudice. In the 1950s my older colleagues and mentors in the social sciences rationally convinced me (in spite of what I had learned from Cherokee elders and my own intuition) that Indians could adjust to American society and still remain Indians. I was so convinced by my mentors because of both my personal attachment to them and the tremendous respect I had for their intellects. As I

look back over it I believe that their view was a statement of faith rather than a scientific prediction based on the evidence. In any case, by the late '60s all the evidence accumulated by me over the preceding twenty years convinced me that such was not the case, and I began to feel a strong sense of having been hoodwinked and betrayed. Therefore, any positive prediction about group relations in the U.S. by social scientists is usually taken by me as another instance of "wish fulfillment" on the part of these unwitting handmaidens, my colleagues. My only defense for this irrational response is that I did work my tail off for twenty years to no avail, basing my struggle and goals on a false premise. However, this is a profound prejudice and I work hard to contain it.

2. The second weakness in our thinking comes from our status as a "colonized" people and is usually referred to as the ghetto mentality or the colonial mentality. One sees this attitude particularly in colonies, ghettos, and on Indian reservations. One of the characteristics of this mentality is to see the colonial masters as the definers of the world and the source and cause of both of all the good and the bad in the lives of the "colony." There fore, one focuses on the masters; on how to handle and please them in order to get them to do something positive in our situation; and then react surprised and erratically when the masters act negatively toward us. (One sees this attitude across the spectrum of Indian "leadership" - tribal officials, militants, traditional chiefs, etc.)

Worse, it focuses our attention away from what we can do for our selves and away from the internal condition of our communities. In fact, in order to please our masters we help exploit and to socially and psychologically damage our communities as well, by taking part in sanctioning "development" and bureaucratic social welfare programs.

What is even more frightening, we accept the fact of our powerlessness as a good, a given, and as normal. We are more than willing to play by the rules of a no-win game; rules that are laid down by the colonial masters. We even learn his words for describing the game, buzz words that change every few years and whose function it is to disguise what really is happening - words such as self-determination, for the process of contracting the administration of government services to tribes, without any shift in the decision-making powers; Indian sovereignty, for the exercise of a smaller degree of decision-making power than almost any other American community, etc.

Franz Fanon deals extensively with the colonial mentality, this fear of freedom, in his classic book, Wretched of the Earth.

The fundamental fact of American Indian existence, however, is not that we are primarily a racial minority, or an ethnic group, or even colonized peoples; but that we are native North American peoples, small nationalities, who have been over-run, conquered, and robbed of our resources by aliens and who are now exploited and tightly controlled by these now alien masters. Harsh, but true!

3. The third major defect in our thinking is caused by our western education and the European languages in which we analyze and write.

Western education pushes one toward reifying, breathing life into and attributing cause to, abstract notions. For instance, I am doing some violence to reality by talking about "Indians" in this paper. There are as yet no Indians in any real social and cultural sense. There may be Indians in a legal sense or in the way American society as a whole treats Indians, but that is about as far as one can legitimately speak of "Indians". Such reification is most distorting because it ignores context. When I say "educated Indians" I could better say "those educated members of aboriginal North American national groups, as well as those detached members who live scattered in other areas and are educated." This educated Indian terminology is not too much of a distortion, but to say that "communism is expanding over the world" is a considerable distortion. So far as I know "communism," as such, can't act at all, much less expand. Still, we are on fairly safe ground here because we know that we are using a shorthand way of describing a complex phenomenon.

It is when we say things like "communism is an oppressive system" that we are in trouble. At this level we are completely out of human context. Better to say, "communism may, by its very nature as a political philosophy, be oppressive; and certainly the Russians, who have a long history of oppressive governments, have created it in this mode in the Soviet union."

Even without this problem of reification of abstractions there is still a problem to my mind with the place of ideas in human affairs in Western thought. Most people in the West think it is great men, great ideas, and great ideologies that are ultimately causal in human affairs, even most of the so-called Marxists. I am sure that potent ideas that spread to people who are able to then see a clear course of action are important causes in human behavior. However, if Marx said one thing right it is that ideas are generated and proceed from the particulars of human experience. This idea does not mean that Christianity was not a very important influence on European culture or that spirituality is not important in human affairs. It means that important ideas come out of human experience and must be fed back into human experience to be influential. It is not academic philosophers in ivory towers nor political theorists that chart the human course. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that codes, ideologies, etc. are most times used by individuals to justify past action rather than as guides to action.

Americans have a great deal of trouble with categories and categorical thinking because they are not clear about the content and nature of their categories. For instance, Indians are a racial minority relative to "us" and thus must be a social reality; therefore, a tribe is a local subdivision of this larger reality. Tribal differences and conflicts among Indians and in African nation-states are merely the result of some kind of provincial hard-

headed

ness, in this view; as is "religious" strife in northern Ireland.

Younger Americans push this process further and erect large, lumpin categories based on the existence of modern institutional bureaucracies. Thus, America is equated with the government, the nation-state bureaucracy; and more narrowly with the present administration and its policies. America is not the geographic area (the land) and the people, nor the ideals of constitutional democracy, nor is it a political and social vision. America is an institutional bureaucracy, the government and its symbol, the flag. Therefore, you burn the flag or wave it if you disagree or agree with the policy of the present administration.

Needless to say, young middle class Americans scare the beshit out of me. They are fascist in mind set, if not in content.

Many young Indians get caught in this same categorical bag. These young people know that one of the rules in the Indian identity search is that one must be anti-white to be Indian. The institution which to them most exemplifies the European white is Christianity. (I suppose because white Christian bigots have, in the past, denounced Indian tribal life and native Indian religions.) Christianity then becomes the white Christian belief system, Christian faith and practice, the clergy, the church bureaucracies, Christianity as an ideology, local Indian churches. And one must condemn this symbol of whiteness, CHRISTIANITY. Most young whites would agree up to that last point, and the hippies and the ecologists might agree with the last point, as well. Most of the Indian bigots who follow a traditional Indian religion would agree for different reasons; fortunately, they are few in number. Most tribal Indians, Christian or otherwise, are simply a little confused by this exercise of categorical, out-of-context logic.

Lastly, the western notion of human nature bothers me considerably; a common human nature which expresses itself in similar qualities of personality and character, and in similar motivations, goals, desires, ultimate ambitions, and the like. Therefore, you don't have to look at anyone to know them, you can just examine your own navel and imagine your own reactions in a similar situation. On a gross level, everyone is basically the same, aren't they? This is the vulgar western notion of human nature, but scholars and most social scientists hold a more sophisticated view of this same notion. Therefore, you can do what you will to other people if you are powerful, because you know they have the same goals, desires, etc. as you do. If it turns out that they don't respond according to expectations they must be misled, or deluded, or subverted, or too uneducated, or twisted out of shape by poverty, or even less than human.

I am convinced that there is indeed a common human nature, but I am not sure about its content. I do know that people are damned different, as individuals and cultures; and the major sin in this century is not looking and paying attention, however

psychologically painful and time consuming that is. The second major sin is not knowing that you don't know something.

Finally, let me say that I am sure that most of you are well aware of all these impediments to clear analyses. But I hope that my ire put down on paper in a systematic manner will provide some more thinking by you on this subject.

12

THE HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN ALCOHOL USE AS A COMMUNITY BASED PHENOMENON

Written for a conference on Indian alcohol use held in Maryland in the mid-'70s. The conference was sponsored by Samuel Stanley of the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.

In order not to "sail under false colors," I should state first off that I have never done any systematic research on drinking patterns among North American Indians. I have done field work in many parts of North America, however, and I have been socially a part of one kind or another of Indian community, or social group, most of my life. This paper, then, is almost by definition, reflective in nature. I suppose one could charitably say that I am presenting an explication of a fairly firm hypothesis. I am going to speak about North American Indians, which means that my argument will be on a very high level of generality. North American Indians are a category that includes a great many distinct peoples with unique cultures, histories, and languages. They are a category and a minority only vis-a-vis the rest of North American society. Most individual North American Indians still have a very locally based identity. They are much more, say, Pomo than Indian. More, they may be aware of themselves as a submerged, small nationality; but most Indians have little awareness of themselves as a member of a racial grouping which is a minority in two large nation-states. Therefore, the dynamic of being a minority, insofar as North American Indian peoples are concerned is an important dynamic surely, but it is probably not more important than many others. In any case, I intend to speak on a very high level of generality about the history of Indian alcohol use.

My interpretation of the history of Indian alcohol use is based on what seems to me to be the nature of the North American local group as a social system and, conversely, the nature of the individual Indian who is part of that social system. Of course, the complete description of these local groups as a general type of society and person would fill volumes, so I will focus on those aspects which are pertinent to my presentation.

To begin with, the majority (and I want to exclude particularly the Pueblos and Hopis from my discussion, because they seem to be very different from other Indians) of North American Indian local groups varied in population size from between sixty to six hundred. Hunting bands were in the lower range of population, and semi-agricultural villages nearing the six hundred limit. These were face-to-face communities, no larger than the largest unit which could use consensus effectively as a social mechanism. That is to say, when a local group reached the six hundred population limit, general agreement was difficult simply because of size. And consensus is a very important social mechanism in North American groups; perhaps because there is so little authority vested in individuals or roles. The relationships among individuals in these small social systems are personal, systematic, fixed by birth and descent, structured, agreed on, and predictable. In other words, this is a group of kinsmen who lived in intimate association with one another over time.

Further, this group of kin lived in direct relationship to the natural environment, and the organizational form of the kin group, the economy, many customs, religious notions, etc., seem to be a direct response to living in a specific natural environment. The experience over time of this group of kin was lodged in a body of sacredly sanctioned tradition. The need for harmony among kin, the sacred proscriptions of tradition, the wisdom of the elders and the like was the social cement of such a group.

Needless to say, an individual socialized in such a milieu would tend to be very responsive - not passive but responsive - to kin, to consistent traditional rules, to the natural world, and simply to what is going on around him. This is not a person who stands apart from life and makes rational choices among alternatives, nor one who continually assesses the consequences of his individual actions. Rather he or she is immersed in his own immediate life, particularly his social life. Guides, cues, controls and sanctions are external rather than internal.

Let me give you an example which I think encapsulates the above kind of person. I have a friend who was the first full-blood Cherokee to graduate from college in this century, graduating around 1950. He is a very competent man, a talented politician and administrator. He and I worked on a project together in Oklahoma in the sixties. He went through a period of heavy drinking, which is unusual among Cherokees and which results in very severe negative sanctions being applied to the errant individual. He was in very difficult circumstances. In a space of one month he "totaled" three cars. He said, "This has got to be more than a streak of bad luck. Somebody is conjuring me (using bad medicine). I am going to an Indian doctor tomorrow." Now consider his view of his situation. He is not a man who sees himself as responsible for his own actions, certainly not responsible for any of those wrecks. He did not link together in any causal way the facts that he was dead drunk and the wrecking of those cars. In fact, the "cause" was external to him.

Such a person flourishes well in a context of loved and loving kin; a consistent and unquestioned body of tradition; external guides and cues; sacred sanctions to which there are no alternatives; and the guidance of prestigious elders who have experienced most of life and who speak with the wisdom which comes from an understanding of tradition and who have come to understand the consequences of individual actions. If Indian elders do not have prestige in an Indian community, young Indians appear disoriented.

It is my contention that I have not only presented a portrait of early Indians but that such is the "nature" of most modern Indian communities and individual Indians. To be sure there have been a great many changes in the last two hundred years or so. Western civilization has almost replaced and natural world as the environment for Indians. And Indian communities have responded and tried to adapt to this new and overwhelming social environment. In the process Indian groups have taken over a great many European ways; but perhaps more importantly, tradition has been weakened and called into question, the relations between kin disturbed, the moral prestige of elderly eroded, and so forth. Therein, I submit, lies the difficulty.

I am sure that all those who know North American Indians have heard many times, perhaps in different prose, the above analysis from Indian elders. They use different words but the import is the same. Indian elders have been consistently critical of permissiveness in Indian schools. They have been fearful of the social harm which could come from the imposition on their communities of western social forms such as republican form government. If you think about the need for harmony among tribal kinsmen you will understand what social harm majority rule and secret ballot can do to this kind of people. Indian elders are also concerned about the confusion created by competing Christian sects among their people. Some are doubtful about an educational system which is secular and which competes with their own explanation of the universe. Nearly all opposed the repeal of federal laws which prohibited the sale of liquor to Indians. Unfortunately, many of their objections conflict with the middle class liberal ethic and ideology which views all humans as basically individual choice-makers and sees progress as a process of widening the arena of choice for individuals and increasing the number of alternatives from which to choose. Even more unfortunate, such liberal notions are an integral part of the self-image of many Americans and Canadians so that the above kind of statement by Indian elders is usually discounted. Such statements are not seen as coming from a lifetime of astute observation of Indian behavior, but as outmoded ideological notions of the nature of man.

Now with the preceding statement about the nature of Indian individuals and communities in mind, let me briefly discuss the history of North American Indian alcohol use. Alcoholic beverages were unknown in most of North America before European contact. However, in almost every Indian group I know about, the initial response to alcoholic beverages was the same - a drunken orgy. When the first white man opened the

first keg of liquor, nearly every Indian in proximity proceeded to get uproariously drunk and continued drinking as long as the liquor held out. Drunken fights were usually a feature of the party. Indian desire for alcohol was so strong that it was a stock-in-trade of the fur trade in northern United States and Canada. In some areas, drunken parties were institutionalized and a few men were appointed to stay sober and oversee the party. In other groups, the women were the overseers. One of the foci of every nativistic movement among North American Indians, from Pontiac to Tecumseh to Handsome Lake to Smohalla to the Peyote movement, has been the control of alcohol use.

Why such a response to alcohol? Firstly, I think simply because drinking is very pleasurable for North American Indians. I might make a hypothesis at this point as to why drinking is so pleasurable for North American tribals. Indians are very cued in to their fellows. Interaction is tenuous, at best. One is always trying to achieve a state of harmony and good feeling with others. Social life is thus a little intimidating. It is intense and exhausting. The "other" is so definitive that one's existence is almost in the other's hands, so to speak. This is, of course, a fearful condition and Indians are a little fearful of each other except in very structured circumstances. Drinking blunts this intensity and fearfulness, while the rewards of interaction remain. It imparts a spirit of social recklessness, confidence, and courage. One even has the courage to express resentment openly and without fear of future retribution. Quarrelsomeness will be forgiven as only "the liquor talking," not the fault of the individual. Drunkenness even partakes of the aura of a religious experience to North American Indians. Extreme drunkenness does resemble that state of consciousness in the vision quest, just before one receives a vision.

Secondly, alcohol was a new factor in Indian life, so that there were no external controls or checks on its use. Thirdly, its socially destructive consequences were not clearly perceived until late in each people's response to European contact.

Most of the eastern Indians in the United States were able to control the use of alcohol in the late 1700s and early 1800s by reforming their aboriginal religions, so as to build in strong social and religious sanctions against alcohol use, or else by developing a native Christianity which accomplished the same purpose. I am thinking here of peoples like the Iroquois, Choctaw, Creek, Winnebago, Cherokee, Kickapoo, etc. At a later time in history some tribes of eastern Washington and northern California were able to develop a similar sacred containment of alcohol use. Of course, these peoples were independent societies when they understood their reforms. In a large sense, these peoples were fortunate to have had this necessary autonomy in the early history of their contact with whites. And most of these peoples are still free from excessive alcohol use, particularly the eastern tribes. Some of the Great Lakes Indians had been so eroded institutionally by participation in the fur trade economy that they were unable to create the necessary social controls. They did develop new institutions such as the Midewiwin, a semi-secret society of shaman-priests, but destructive drinking was already out of

control by that period.

However, it is in the western portion of the United States and in Canada as a whole that tribal groups have generally been unable to deal with heavy alcohol use. At the very time most of these peoples were meeting the problem of alcohol abuse head-on, they were placed on reservations, their affairs were completely administered by the federal government, their religions and cultures were attacked and discredited, and their children placed in schools. The school was designed to "de-Indianize" them. In the process their whole institutional structure collapsed. Their religion and elders were discredited. The Christianity introduced among them has remained in the control of the "colonial establishment," so it has never become a native institution. Needless to say, the possibility for the revamping of tradition by elders to control alcohol use among these groups was effectively precluded.

Many communities in the western Great Lakes region, northern plains, the Northwest and northern Canada have lived with the destructive abuse of alcohol now for almost one hundred years. This abuse is almost always correlated with crime, family trouble, and even suicide in Indian communities. A cursory look at the statistics coming from reservations near Seattle, some of the Paiute groups, the Kootanai of Idaho, most of the Sioux and Chippewa reservations, and nearly all the reserves in Canada tell a story of a rather dismal community life. As a friend of mine once said about his home community, "You can't get a night's sleep around here for the drunks either coming waking you up and fighting in the yard or else killing themselves on the highway."

Since World War II the problem has intensified on many reservations. Even the isolation of the reservations in the Southwest has broken down. Education and income have shot up dramatically in most Indian areas and with it the incidence of social ills - family breakdown, juvenile crime and alcoholism. Many Indians now find themselves on the receiving end of a bad minority situation vis-a-vis their white neighbors. Their fathers might have shrugged off such a situation of life if indeed they would even have perceived it. But young Indians do not live in a closed, bounded world as did their fathers. The autonomous tribal world is beginning to break down. Whites no longer do as they do because of their nature and Indians do as they do because of the way God created them. Many young Indians are now part of a general humanity and white opinions about them are definitive to some degree and not out of the range of their emotional response. Modern Indians are just now emerging from the tribal world and as yet have no defense against the negative opinions of "respectable" whites, and many are very hurt in this process. Further, life on most reservations gives one a view of one's self as a member of an inadequate people, and ergo an inadequate human being.

In response to this new condition of life even some of the Indian peoples, some of those in eastern Washington and Oregon and others in the Midwest, who had made a

satisfactory adjustment in earlier days by the building of sacred social controls to contain excessive drinking, collapsed before the onslaught of the twentieth century. The problem was not simply one of social control after World War II - it was also necessary to insulate the tribe from social erosion and to mediate many outside influences. Many Indian peoples, especially those of eastern Washington and Oregon, had lost too much of their political, emotional, and intellectual autonomy to attempt this insulation and mediation. Those peoples who not only had a history of sacred reform but who also had strong "priesthoods," some autonomy, a generally resistant attitude to outside white influence, and perhaps some social or physical isolation, were able to hold together and not succumb to social breakdown and excessive drinking in this era.

In recent years there have been two new significant, for our purpose, developments on the Indian scene. One, many Indian "Tribes" have developed great governmental bureaucracies which seem to be in the process of giving the finishing blow to local Indian communities much more effectively than older colonial style establishment ever could have. Bureaucratic alcohol use programs have preempted any possible local initiative by community leaders.

The second new development is that large numbers of individual Indians have moved to cities. The city is the antithesis of the tribe as a society and style of life, and thus either increases difficulty for Indians in regards to drinking or else sometimes creates a drinking problem. But a surprising development is happening among Indians in cities, one I would not have predicted. Indian Alcoholics Anonymous groups are having a great deal of success. The Indians that I know in AA programs are persons who have become partially transformed by their experience in the cities. City life has, in some degree, made them choice-makers rather than persons who simply react appropriately to social circumstances. This kind of Indian has a notion that his individual action has consequences and that he or she is causal in what happens to themselves. They understand what commitment is, a very sophisticated urban notion, and they are able to make a commitment of self. Of course, the social aspect of AA is important to them as well. Unfortunately, AA seems to work less well for less urbanized Indians in the city - that is, Indians who are still more traditional in their outlook - nor does AA have much success in rural Indian areas.

Let me turn now to the individual Indian heavy drinker and tell you the types of heavy drinkers I see. I will be implying "cause" in these types, of the kind that permeates my analysis so far. I hope you will see how these types fit into my general framework.

The first common type I see is simply the tribal Indian who likes to drink and who lives in the city or else in a community where there are no sanctions against such behavior. Such a drinker is simply hooked on pleasure. If there are no cues to the contrary, a tribal Indian will do what he enjoys. Most tribals like themselves very much, unlike most middle class whites. Since they feel that they are really great, then they

deserve some
thing great. Drinking is great. So they may proceed to drink until their liver collapses.

The second type of heavy drinker is one whose social life is organized around drinking. This type is very common in cities where Indian bars are the only source of social life, or among young reservation Indians. Like the first type, he may also become physically addicted to alcohol.

Thirdly, a significant number of Indians appear to drink in order to overcome or dull feelings of inadequacy. I don't think that this type is as common as the first two types, but it is fairly common. Many times these feelings of inadequacy are rooted in being an Indian in one way or another. Further, it is this type of drinker who seems most drawn to the Indian Power movement and "The Indian Religion."

There is a fourth type, one I see among young educated Indians. Many seem profoundly closed off and cut off from social life and classically alienated. They appear to have been over-institutionalized by their school experience and are "way inside," as young people term it. Many have also feelings of inadequacy, but they appear to drink in order to "come out" and be able to have some kind of genuine relationships with others. I would guess that this is also a common type among young middle class whites.

To be concerned with one's own goals, thoughts, and self is not an unusual condition for civilized, urban people. However, this means that such a person is, to some degree, cut off from others and lives inside of "his own head," so to speak. For a significant number of young urban Americans it is necessary to retire inside before the onslaught of modern life in order to retain some integrity and autonomy of self. Many young Americans prefer to have indirect personal relationships with others through music or by way of drink without having to relate directly to another, without a face-to-face confrontation. Further, urban people tend to let others see their selves only partially, and open up slowly. Older tribal Indians either completely close off, as with strangers, or completely open up, as with kin. But life in the modern school has had a profound impact on their grandchildren. These young Indians resemble their white school mates in significant ways.

Fifth, and lastly, there is a type which is becoming more and more common in my experience. Many Indian couples drink heavily during their early years of marriage and may neglect their children. Children may be left alone for long periods during a drinking bout, or else shunted off on an already overburdened grandmother. Some of these children get a sense of being unwanted and unworthy of love from this experience. In some families this pattern has gone on for three generations now. Alcohol-related child abuse is such a problem in some states that one-fifth of all Indian children in those states have been taken by the court and placed in foster homes. Then the next generation drinks in order to bear their pain of an unwanted childhood, and the drinking becomes a vicious circle.

But in recent times I see a new twist to this general pattern. In their thirties, a couple may slack off drinking and try to make up for the early neglect of their child by indulging their now teenage boy or girl. In this stage the adolescent comes to believe that life should be wonderful. The feeling of being unworthy of love and at the same time thinking that life should be wonderful is an unsolvable dilemma for most except by looking at life through the rose-colored glasses of alcohol. One sees a significant number of young Indians now who are this type of drinker. Now this typology is rather off-handed, to say the least, and these are probably not the only common types of drinkers. Further, these "pure" types are a distortion, and some Indian drinkers show aspects of more than one. But this typology is not really central to my paper. I am simply briefly presenting it to illustrate where my analysis leads when applied to the individual qua individual.

Let me return to the main body of my paper, which is to look at drinking in the context of the tribal community. It should be obvious to the reader by this point that I believe that Indian drinking does not have a "psychological" cause, in the ordinary sense of the word. Rather, it is caused, given the nature of the tribe and the tribal personality, by the socially disintegrating impact of western civilization on Indian societies. Much Indian drinking is simply a matter of lack of the necessary sacred social controls. Even in cases where Indians drink to deal with some human pain, the difficulties lie much more in the realm of community life and relationships than strictly internal to the individual.

Further, American and Canadian society seems determined to keep Indian communities in a perpetual state of social breakdown by over-controlling and over-administrating them. Some way must be found to help Indian societies help themselves and "cure," in their terms, such problems as excessive drinking.

Some Indian groups have made valiant efforts, in recent years, to deal with their drinking problems. In the 1960s the San Carlos Apache integrated Protestant fundamentalism into their life and thus slowed down excessive drinking considerably. But they managed this largely in spite of professional whites in the "helping" professions. There is some bowing in the direction of the Navaho Native American Church, the followers of the Peyote road, in their efforts to halt destructive drinking among the Navahos. But as a whole, such efforts are ignored by official helping agencies. In fact, one must ask the question as to whether official "helpers," white or Indian, do not add to the difficulty since they are agents of a civilization which promotes secularity and individuation, and preempts local initiative?

The city Indian scene is much more complex than the rural areas. One hears much talk about the "Indian community" in the city, but Indians in the city are very far from being a community. Most Indians in the city are not kin, were not raised together, are not even from the same tribe, and most in fact are strangers to one another. Most live

as scattered single individuals or in small nuclear family groups. There are not even very many older people around. Most city Indians are still oriented toward "home," the rural community. Of course, this leaves most Indians of the city who have drinking problems in a social vacuum, or else the local Indian bar becomes the only possible social life. But a more genuine Indian community life in the city would certainly ease the drinking problem for many individual Indians.

Now let me broaden my concerns by suggesting some more general ideas. American Indians are not the only tribals to have had difficulty with alcohol. The story of Lot in the Old Testament is our first recorded case of such a difficulty. That difficulty was solved by Lot removing himself and his family from Sodom, from external temptations - a typical tribal solution. Later Jewish response was prohibition by definition; another tribal technique. That is to say, drinking is un-Jewish and a characteristic of non-Jews; therefore if you drink, what are you? Later, in the history of the Middle East, Arabic religionists built strict prohibitions about the use of alcohol into the Muslim religion; a religion which faced the concerns of tribal Bedouins. Many East African tribes have structured drinking so it becomes a reward for a lifetime of service and the exclusive domain of elders only. North European tribals simply suffered the curse of excessive drinking and violence for many hundreds of years until they ceased to be tribal societies; and even today the rural areas of Ireland and Scandinavia still grapple with that problem.

Some North American Indian people, particularly those in the eastern United States, have built a strict prohibition against alcohol use into their sacred life, with severe social sanctions against its use. For example, as Lionel de Montigny mentioned in his article on alcoholism, Kickapoos simply define a heavy drinker as a non-Kickapoo (non-person), with the implied threat of social ostracism. Some tribes say drinking ruins the "medicine" of a ceremony. Creeks will literally tie a drunk to a nearby tree if he comes to a ceremony. Cherokees shun a drinker somewhat in the manner of the Amish. Choctaws will expel a drinker from Sunday School and/or church, which functionally means social exile.

Most tribes have not been able to deal with the problem, for various reasons. At this point in history it would be my prediction that the general American society will not allow Indian communities the autonomy to deal with destructive drinking. I doubt that sacred reform by Indian elders with "clout" is now possible even though this has been the traditional, and successful, solution among American Indian peoples. Not only are most Indian communities in too "weak" a social condition to undertake such a reform, but American society may now only allow Indians the single option of secular, bureaucratic, programmatic solutions, which deal with the individual, not the community. Such efforts, which only deal with the individual, will only weaken relations and aggravate the problem. Many Indian communities may have to suffer with destructive drinking for hundreds of years, as did north European tribes.

I would also respectfully suggest that, if my analysis of the dynamics of tribal societies and tribal persons is valid at all, it may also be valid to a degree for other small communities which are tribal-like or folk-like - working class ethnics in American cities, rural southern blacks, Appalachian whites, Latin peasants, ghetto blacks, etc. If nothing else, I hope that my "explication" has given the reader a new look at an important facet of human behavior.

13

LETTER TO POPE JOHN PAUL II

This letter was written on January 31, 1985 to Pope John Paul, preparatory to a meeting of Bishops at which the reforms of Vatican II were to be discussed and evaluated.

Your Excellency:

I pray that you will get to see this letter, or that at least it will reach a reasonable level in the church hierarchy.

First, let me introduce myself. My name is Robert K. Thomas. I am presently Professor and Director of Indian Studies at the University of Arizona. I am an anthropologist by training, and a product of the University of Arizona and the University of Chicago. I am an Oklahoma Cherokee Indian, but reside on the edge of the San Xavier Papago Indian Reservation, just south of Tucson, Arizona. My grandchildren attend school at San Xavier del Bac Mission School.

Secondly, allow me to say how much I admire you as a spiritual leader and as an intellectual. The Catholic Church is indeed fortunate to have you "at the helm" in these troubled times. I have read all of your encyclicals, as well as all the sermons, homilies, and speeches of yours that I could obtain. As far as I am concerned, you are one of the few thinkers of this era in the West who can clearly see the real problem of our times. You understand, both spiritually and intellectually, that the true enemy of humanity in these times is the large, centralized, bureaucratic, de-humanized nation-state which is sanctioned and guided by one or another of the modern philosophies of secular materialism. Further, I take it that you feel that capitalism is only a little less oppressive and corroding to the human spirit than is communism.

You may not know that there is a substantial minority of academics here in the

United States who agree whole-heartedly with your analyses. But we are a voice in the wilderness. If the clergy and educated lay people as a whole in the U.S. do not understand you (and they do not), then there is little chance that they can understand us. There are, as well, some academic Marxists, the brightest and best ones, in western Europe who are coming to share your viewpoint. Of course, the common people of eastern and southern Europe and the Third World understand you intuitively and love you.

Now to get to the point of this letter: I understand that you are calling a meeting of Bishops to evaluate (if that is the right word) the Vatican II reforms. Let me say right off that North American and Mexican Indian groups have not benefited from the Vatican II reforms. Quite the opposite. And I say this as a scientific observer and a religious Indian who has done field work and visited among Indian groups all over North America and Mexico.

There are two major problems among Catholic Indians which stem from a "misapplication" of the Vatican II reforms. The first problem is the language use in the church. Because of the distribution of power and resources in North America and Mexico very few Indians become priests. Therefore, nearly all of the priests in Indian areas are native English or Spanish speakers. Unfortunately, the language of the church in Indian parishes thus becomes English in the United States and Spanish in Mexico, the "official" language of those respective nation-states and the native languages of the majority groups in each country.

As you well know, a people's language is the cornerstone of their identity. Minority peoples in the U.S. and Mexico must do official business in the language of the majority. Their children are bombarded by these languages by way of the mass media and the school system. The language of the market place is English in the U.S. and Spanish in Mexico; and so on ad infinitum. Now Indians must face an alien and competing language in their own churches. At least Latin was a holy language from the past and belonged to no one national group. Now the church seems to be sponsoring linguistic imperialism, and thus weakening the identity of Indian groups and fostering their social demise as separate, unique peoples. Perhaps this attack on Indian identity is inadvertent, but the lack of evil intent does not make it any less serious.

The second problem is largely confined to the United States and Canada. The problem is that local clergy in many Indian areas are too enthusiastic about community involvement and in making church services culturally relevant to local Indians. Thus, some clergy are trying to drag the whole community into the church to remake it there. In the process they are weakening the local lay Catholic religious institutions. In the past, in northern United States and Canada, the clergy discouraged the development of a semi-independent, local Indian Catholicism, so that such religious institutions are virtually absent in that large region. However, this new policy will not convince those who accuse

the church of being agents of white imperialism. It will only weaken native Catholic institutions, and stifle such development in those Indian groups who do not yet have such structures. I am sure that you of all people understand how important it is for a community to have these kinds of local religious institutions. Villages in Poland and Italy are strong and Christian just because the clergy has, over the years, sanctioned such a development. Local native Catholic institutions are even more important to Indians in the U.S. and Canada. Indians have little chance to participate in government or economic affairs in their areas. Religion is their only free option. It is here that they can grow spiritually and intellectually. It is here that they can develop social controls, and leaders and thinkers, without which they cannot survive as peoples.

Further, some of the younger white clergy in Indian areas feel that they can make Catholicism relevant to Indians by draping Catholic services with Indian symbols - pipes, eagle feathers, sweetgrass, etc. Some of the more "modern" Indians are satisfied with this incorporation of Indian symbols. Many Indians are confused and uncomfortable in such a situation. Others are shocked. Clergy may be trained in proscriptions and prohibitions of orthodox Catholic practice, but they rarely understand how to be religiously respectful toward Indian sacred articles. Unfortunately, most of these young white clerics do not consult with Indian elders in this process of "Indianizing" Catholic ritual. They simply take it on themselves to forge ahead in their search for relevance. I have heard Indian drinking songs native to one region performed in church by choirs of Indian children from another region. Most Indians are too polite to correct a well meaning white choir director in such circumstances.

The source of this second problem is the same as in the first problem - a lack of understanding of Indians, no real consultation with Indians, and an inadvertent pressuring of a people who do not like to say no to a holy person of a dominant race. I think that one could safely say that the above is a distortion of the Vatican II reforms.

These problems of ours may not seem very important in comparison to most of the problems with which you must deal - the greediness of unseemly rich North America, the breakdown of family in industrial areas, priests who mouth vulgar Marxist banalities, church "liberals" who would diminish church authority by acceding to the demands of life in the secular city and so weaken the social fabric in rural areas, etc. However, to us these problems I bring to your attention are matters of survival or social extinction - life or death as peoples.

As an aside, let me tell you how unfortunate it was that you couldn't land at Fort Simpson in Canada and talk to the Indians waiting there. I am afraid that the anti-Christian bigots among the native leadership now have all the ammunition they need to discredit the church among many Indian groups. I beg you to make some symbolic gesture soon which will reassure Catholic Indians in Canada of your love for them.

Your Eminence, I don't want to deceive you so I should tell you that I am not a Catholic, not even a Christian. I still hold to the ancient Cherokee faith alone. However, I feel that I have "paid my dues" to the Catholic Church. I was married in the Church to a Catholic Papago Indian girl. She died in 1963, leaving me to raise five children by myself. I raised them Catholic, as she would have wished. All of my fourteen grandchildren are Catholic, as well. I help raise money for the folk Catholic Papago Indian feasts, attend most of these feasts, and go to Mass with my grandchildren once in a while. I even became an ecumenist in my middle years. I helped found the Traditional Movement in 1966, a league of the leadership of traditional Indian religions. Then in 1969 I helped found the Indian Ecumenical Conference, a meeting of all Indian faiths, both Christian and traditional. Our meetings were held in Morley, Alberta.

In closing, let me say that this letter is not a disguised attack on our local clergy, quite the contrary. We are lucky in this area to be blessed by understanding clerics who are true Christians, by and large. Our pastor at San Xavier, Father Walter, is a fine and decent Christian man who has a real understanding of the Papago people; and although I do not know our local Bishop personally, everyone tells me that he is a good man, and I do know that he understands what it feels like to be a member of a minority people and culture.

Your Eminence, I hope that this letter will be of some help to you in lightening, in a small way, the great burden that you bear. My prayers are with you.

Yours in fellowship,

Robert K. Thomas, Professor,
American Indian Studies

14

ADVICE TO THE CHURCHES

In 1959 Bob met with representatives of the National Council of Churches to help them evaluate the modern mission effort among American Indians. He began his paper by outlining what tribal societies look like under normal conditions, how religion functions in tribal societies as opposed to urban societies, and how change, and particularly religious change, comes about in tribal societies. The following excerpt begins with the last section, a presentation of his three recommendations to the churches.

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Let me make a few recommendations. It is obvious what much of my discussion is leading up to. Indian communities must have control of their own churches, with native leadership in the important institutional niches. Only then can the church in fact become a Kiowa or a Navajo institution, express this "Kiowaness" or "Navajoness", be integrated into the life of the people and be an integrative mechanism itself. The only people who can do this job are the people themselves. Outsiders cannot do it, nor can the institution with native personnel do it as long as the money and decision-making power resides elsewhere, outside the Indian community. Further, the church as an institution will only become a learning institution and help American Indians in their adjustment when the conditions I just mentioned are fulfilled. Further, without these necessary conditions the church will never be a bridge between the local community and the outside society, as Indians in many communities so desperately want.

Unthinking pressure for assimilation by the church is not only negative, it is destructive - as a scientist this appalls me, as a moral American it angers me.

My recommendations are two. One, that the church as an institution be placed firmly in the hands of local Indians along with decision-making power and money to implement those decisions. (Many church leaders seem to be worried about how best to break into what is termed by them as the "power circle". That is, they are concerned about missionaries being part of the local power structure. If the money and decision-making power was given to the Indian community, in the nature of the case white missionaries would become "servants" of their congregations and the Indians themselves would "pull" their missionaries out of the power structure and integrate them into the local community, or eject them and get a new missionary.)

Secondly, I think churches need to look at what the requirements are for Indians to be Christians. It seems to me that much "dogma" passed off to Indians as Christian is some bit of personal ideology of an individual missionary or some secular value of middle-class American life. Indians will never become standard middle-class American Protestants anymore than Welsh Methodists will become like southern American Methodists. Nor do I think this is necessarily bad. In order to avoid undue pressure I do think the church will have to decide such questions for Indians Christians as, what is essential and basic in being a Christian? What is of minor importance in church practice? What is superficial? What should be weeded out and not included at all, such as pressure for assimilation or the propagation of some middle-class value? I am suggesting that Indian churches be Indian churches, and that democracy, respect and tolerance be the other side of the coin of Christianity. We might, as urban Americans, show to Indians a side of the Christian tradition that they have seen little of - democracy, respect and tolerance. Such attitudes we demand as part of our rights as Americans.

As an aside, let me say that I am not suggesting that people in the mission field

give up their life's work. I am suggesting a way that this work can be more productive for mission workers, and that is for mission workers to be advisors rather than directors. I feel this kind of relationship is not only the most feasible but is central in Protestant thought as I understand it. Further, by being real advisors rather than directors, they could help Indian people achieve this necessary integration, stability, and adjustment. And I assume these are the ends we are working toward.

American Indians could easily enough become model Christians, although Indian Christians. But their life must not be fragmented, their institution preempted so they cannot get a view of their environment, and the threat of social death hurled at them. The church field could very easily help provide this bright future for American Indians. I am convinced that if these conditions are fulfilled, if "abnormal" circumstances are removed, then American Indians will, as most other groups in the world have, relate realistically to the total cultural enterprise in the present world while fully utilizing the value in Indian heritage and history.

15

"BLESSED ARE THE MEEK"

*Sermon preached in the
Chapel of the Epiphany, Vancouver School of Theology
during the Native Ministries Consortium Summer School,
July 8, 1989*

Text: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5

You know, I read the Bible a lot. I read the New Testament in the Cherokee language because that's my language and I like to read in it. But we don't have the Old Testament in Cherokee, so I read that in English.

Every time I read something in the Bible I learn more. The Old Testament tells me a lot - for instance the Psalms and Proverbs. I think there's a lot of human wisdom there. To some degree that's the accumulated wisdom of the Jews, what they've learned about the human condition as they have lived through time and played out their history.

I have to admit that I think Genesis is a little thin. I suspect that the Jews had gone through so much time and trouble and change by the time they wrote down Genesis in Babylon that they had lost a lot of it, because it isn't very full compared to the Creation and Beginning stories of most tribal people. And you can't hook up Genesis with Leviticus, where the Jewish law is spelled out. In most tribal societies the origin story is

a rationale for the law, but this isn't clear in the Old Testament.

Nevertheless, most of the Old Testament is the sacred history of the Jews, the history of their struggle to survive and to be a chosen people of God - to be God's own and to keep their covenant with the true God, Jehovah. That was pretty hard to do in the Middle East. The Middle East was like a crucible or anvil that damaged peoples and individuals. There were great cities and corrupt civilizations. It must have been hard for a tribal people like the Jews to maintain themselves. And, in fact, the evidence speaks for itself. If you look around the Middle East now, most of the peoples that were mentioned in the Old Testament are not there any more. There are no more Canaanites, or Hittites, or Philistines, or Edomites. Even the Babylonians are gone. Even such a great civilization as Egypt, isolated there on the Nile, has been absorbed over the years. So about the only people left in the Middle East from the Old Testament are the Jews. I think every Indian should almost memorize the Old Testament and take the Jews as a lesson, because we are faced with survival today in as serious a situation as the Jews were in the Old Testament.

As I said, I read the New Testament a lot in the Cherokee language. I read particularly the first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels. I'm tremendously impressed by those four books, the life and sayings of Jesus. I've never seen so much human wisdom packed in so few pages in my life. Every verse has some kind of lesson about the human condition which one can draw on. I know that Jesus had to be divine. That much human wisdom couldn't have been spoken by one person, or one human being, or any group of human beings. And I guess God sent his Son to Palestine at the right place and the right time, when the Jews were involved in one of the most corrupt societies humans have ever seen - the Roman Empire.

As I read the Gospels it looks to me that Jesus had two main tasks that he had set himself. One was to reinforce the Law of Israel, and the other was to add to it in order to meet the problems of the times.

It seems to me that this New Testament time was the first time in human history that people were not living completely surrounded by their kin. They might be living next to strangers, what came to be called neighbors. And Jesus counseled that people should treat their neighbors as if they were kin.

He said things like, "People should not be too judgmental." In the old days everyone might have had common experiences to call upon and there fore could judge another person. But for many people in his time there was not much common experience, and therefore human beings should be wary of being judgmental. It seems to me he said that to his disciples many times. He also said over and over again to be wary of the material life. In other words, Jesus was advising ways and warning against the condition of impersonality, of treating people impersonally, as separated

individuals. And I think his solutions are as true today as they were in that time.

He even warned against what we would call in these days an incorrect analysis. He did not think that the oppression of the Jews by the Romans was the main problem. The main problem was in fact the way that Jew treated Jew, Roman treated Roman, and the way they treated each other. His message is as true today as then. And beyond these main parts of his message it seems to me that every verse has a lesson to be learned about the human condition.

Let's just take one line in the Gospel of Matthew: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." I think this is a profound statement, and I have puzzled for a great many years over what that must mean, and I think I have finally come to some understanding of at least that one line among the many lines contained in that Gospel.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

I'm a social activist and have been for most of my life, and I'll probably end my days charging some barricade somewhere. But I know that all of my activities would be beside the point if North America was really a Christian society. If North America was a decent society for the rich, it would be a decent society for the poor. If it was a decent society for the whites, it would be a decent society for Indians and Blacks. If it was a decent society for men, it would be a decent society for women. If, indeed, we lived our lives according to Christ's admonitions there would be no reason for church programs to help with certain reforms in the general society.

The other thing I know is that after all is said and done, after all of the protests, revolutions, struggles for national independence, after the dust settles and the smoke clears, the meek are still there. And the meek have indeed inherited the earth and will continue to inherit the earth.

When Jesus said, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," I've always wondered if Jesus might be a little chicken. But in recent years I've decided that that wasn't what he was saying. He wasn't counseling caution in dealing with political authorities. He was telling us that political systems are not that important, they come and go, and that to resist them is a little bit beside the point. The real problem is in relationships between individuals. He demonstrated that by refusing to lead a Jewish nationalist uprising. There's no question that "country Jews" followed Jesus into Jerusalem with expectations of over-throwing the Romans, and were puzzled when Jesus failed to act, to give the signal for the revolt. I think he was demonstrating that that was beside the point. He was telling us to look for the "meek", for the meek are always there, trying to get by as best they can, trying to make a living for their families, trying to raise their children - and therefore are a lesson for us all.

If I'm right in what I think Jesus was saying, then we should look to the meek for

guidance. We certainly shouldn't be looking to the prophets of the corrupt secular society in which we live. I think North American society is worse than Rome or Babylon. At least the Romans and Babylonians were honest about their corruption. They didn't call institutionalized greed, "free enterprise." And they didn't masquerade behind seemingly ethical values, nor did they delude themselves about their own motives.

Pope John Paul said, some ten years ago when he spoke to the UN, that as he looked around that august assembly there was not one political system, or political philosophy. that was undergirded by a religious morality, and indeed that is the state of the world in these days.

If that is true, then I think we should be wary about what seem on the surface to be good trends in this society. For instance, there are Marxists who say that the women's liberation movement is playing right into the hands of the capitalist exploiters. They say that now it takes two workers to make a living for a family, and that it is to the advantage of capitalism to get everyone into the market place since they have then a larger and cheaper labor pool. I think perhaps there is some merit to what they say.

Even what seem to be absolute values of absolute good in Western society are suspect when one examines them. For instance, the notion of merit - that human beings should be judged on merit alone, perhaps on their productive capacity in the market place or on their creativity. But if we examine that notion closely that means that we are judging people partially, and we are relating to them as strangers since we do not take into consideration any of their personal ties, like family, community and so forth. In other words, if Jesus says that we should treat strangers as kin, the prophets of merit tells us that we should treat kin as strangers.

Therefore, I am suggesting that "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," means that we should take a lesson from the meek. We should observe their condition closely and be wary of the non-meek. It appears to me that the prophets of new values and social change in a corrupt system, the prophets of social change in Western society, are simply calling for the furthering of the principles of the industrial system - impersonality - the very thing that Jesus warned us against. It seems to me that Christians have made another commitment. They have chosen to be God's chosen people, and by that choice they have negated all other choices. They have committed themselves.

If indeed Christians are God's chosen people, they must have a law. And indeed they do have a law - the Gospels - the first four books of the New Testament.

And, of course, a people have a destiny. I do not know what is the destiny of Christians, those who have chosen to be God's chosen people. But I would suggest that in these days their destiny is to be a rock of the law in a sea of decadence.

And if that is true, Christians are indeed fortunate, and should have a perpetual feeling of joy and rejoicing.

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SOME LAST THOUGHTS

June, 1990

I want to pass along a Cherokee prophecy. When I was a boy the old people told me that in my lifetime I would see four things come about:

One, I would see slick roads running everywhere.

Two, I would see many people who acted like they were deaf and blind, not able to hear or see anything.

Three, I would see people become too smart, not paying attention to anybody or anything, throwing away their traditions and religions, thinking they knew more than God.

Four, the time would come when neither love nor human wisdom would have any value, and at that time people, even some Indians, would put their old people away in special "homes."

Those old Cherokees told me that when I saw those four things come to pass that I would want my children close around me. And, so I do! And so I would recommend to most of us in these days!

For a sixty year old Cherokee like myself it seems that the Cherokee vision of the good life will end, no doubt, with the death of my generation. Since 1900 when our small republic was dissolved by the United States and we were legally and politically integrated into the general American society, Cherokees have seen ourselves as living under the heel of the conqueror and governed by his harsh laws - a captive people. Our policy has been to simply endure and persevere until the time came, perhaps far into the future, when conditions were such that we could be a free people once again.

Now, Cherokees my age find that Cherokees under thirty-five do not share that vision with us, but have come to share in a foreign vision, the American Dream - a vision

which ignores freedom, but which promises material success at the cost of family ties and the spiritual life; and a vision which will probably bring about our disappearance as one of Gods' chosen peoples on this great island of North America. Although we are a large tribe by Indian standards, some 35-50,000, we are still a tiny people living in a sea of aliens. I doubt that we will survive for very many years longer if present trends continue.

When I retire in a few years I intend to go back to Oklahoma and try to set up community schools in the Cherokee language; have complete immersion workshops in the Cherokee language; try to shame young Cherokee parents into speaking Cherokee to their children again; encourage a religious revival; point out on every occasion possible and in pamphlets written in Cherokee, what is by Cherokee standards the "foolishness" of the orientation towards modern American mass culture of younger Cherokees; and so forth.

Presently, I am involved in re-establishing a sacred Fire among the North Carolina Cherokees, and reviving the major Cherokee ceremony, the Green Corn Dance. In two years I hope to help restore all the Fires in Oklahoma.

In the 1970s I was involved in the Indian Ecumenical Conference - a week-long event held on the Stoney reserve near Calgary which gathered together Indian elders and Indian religious leaders of many religious persuasions, aboriginal, grassroots Indian Christians, Peyote, etc. The Conference directed Fr. John A. MacKenzie and myself to set up a permanent center where Indian religionists could come together on a year-round basis. Fr. MacKenzie and I have finally gotten such an institution in motion called the Center for Indian Scholars. We have a Board of Directors and Advisory Board of some twenty-four prestigious Indian elders from all over North America. Our Center is planning a series of meetings in 1992-93, primarily of Indian elders, to evaluate our situation after five hundred years of European contact and domination.

I reside on the San Xavier Papago Indian reservation, just south of Tucson, Arizona; in my wives' village. The Papagos number some 20,000 and are a very "old-time" tribal people who, because of pronounced social and physical isolation, have only recently come into intensive contact with the general society. They, as yet, do not show very much language or cultural loss. I try to help the Papagos develop a consciousness of their situation and possible actions by talking to individuals, making speeches to groups, writing letters to the tribal newspaper, organizing a yearly intertribal pow-wow, and the like. Papagos are beginning to show signs of developing into an enduring people and are as well very concerned about the lives of their children. They may not fall into the trap that other Indian peoples have.

At this point in history, I do not see any way possible for Indians to have a productive relationship with most of the rest of North American society. Quite the contrary! We would surely profit, however, from a relationship with other minority

peoples in other parts of the world who are in a similar position, if for nothing more than needed mutual psychological and spiritual support.

I hate to sound so insular and parochial, but these are bad times for Indians and we do not have many options, nor do we have the luxury to take chances as more secure peoples are able to do. I find this unfortunate because I believe that North American Indians have something to contribute to the world, some wisdom to pass along to our fellow human beings. But, unfortunately, that will have to wait until our social and cultural continuation is assured.