

Editorials

Commentary

The only good Indian is a . . .

White businessmen, interested in the tourist dollar, are suggesting that a \$10,000,000 shrine with a 40-foot tower and an eternal flame be constructed on the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre, just north of Gordon, Neb.

Supposedly, it would commemorate the slaughter that marked the last Indian uprising.

IT WOULD BE more appropriate to construct a 40-foot screw. That would more accurately tell the story of Cowboys and Indians.

Whites screwed the Indians out of nothing less than a continent. But people being people, and nations be nations, that should have been expected. The Indians really got the short end of the peace pipe when they were consigned to reservations too small for immediate needs, and pathetically unsuited for future needs.

ENCOURAGED, EVEN REQUIRED, to become dependent on the U.S. government, Indians as a group have lost self-respect and identity. And the whites, fearing and hating a minority group, as always were very happy to convince themselves that the Indian wanted to be left alone in the wilderness reservations.

To those who believe this, and to those who believe the Nebraska Indian is too lazy and drunken to take advantage of his opportunities:

Get out of your own filthy apathy . . . go to the Pine Ridge Reservation or to the Omaha-Winnebago Reservation.

Imagine yourself living in an area with 70 per cent unemployment. Imagine the disease. The utter dejection of poverty. The paternalism of the White Fathers.

THEN YOU'LL KNOW why an Indian drinks. So would you.

Then you'll know why he must, deep down, have something far from an abiding love for the whites. So would you.

Then, put it all in perspective. The Americans have screwed the Indians in only a few generations in a way that is hardly believable.

Because the Indian's religion was different, white men tried to change him. And because his social institutions were alien, white men tried to wipe those out and replace them with the ideals of capitalism.

Well, naturally, the whites couldn't change a whole race, culture, heritage.

The problems are too myriad to discuss in one editorial, one paper. Solutions are entirely absent. But it all can best be summed up this way:

If you think the white man has messed around the Negro, take a look at the Indian. The black American is finally moving out of the bondage of prejudice and discrimination. But those who know will say that the Indian American is being forced deeper and deeper into that bondage.

Ed Icenogle

A year later . . .

Indians have become pawns in chess game

Pine Ridge — one year later.

I was there last Easter with Bobby Kennedy. He was there campaigning and, more importantly, listening to the Indians' troubles at a hearing in Billy Mills Hall. After the hearing he was given a peace pipe with this charge from the Indians:

"It (the presentation of a peace pipe) is both a pledge of friendship and a promise on the part of the recipient to carry always in his heart a concern for the people he has pledged to help."

Bobby Kennedy is dead, but his concern should be carried on. The problems still exist. The facts and figures get worse before they get better. It's a year later, and progress is slow.

APPARENTLY the situation is still the same. It's all a game. "You be the dumb guy and I'll protect you," as P.S. Deloria, a full-blooded Sioux now doing graduate work at Yale, put it.

A government official hovers over a schoolboard composed of first grade dropouts, illiterates teach illiterates and people with problems help other people with the same problem. As Deloria put it, "We are occasionally used as authenticators never as originators."

I saw more of the reservation this time and got deeper into the geographic isolation which must have a dramatic effect on the Indian's social isolation. Small groups of shacks on a badland prairie.

I SAW THE historic Wounded Knee. In 1890 the Government called the action there a battle, the Indians called it a massacre. Today, there is nothing but a church, a museum, a burial ground and a handful of bitter memories.

Today, we sit in our warm complacency, not thinking about starving people in tumbledown shacks, not feeling what the 16 Vista volunteers see and feel every day, not really concerned about the Indians.

And the words of P.S. Deloria still echo on deaf ears. "Above all, we must see Indian communities as intrinsically valuable, worthy of preservation worthy of attention and not as pawns in a thousand games of self-perpetuation."

Pine Ridge has changed very little. Our attitudes toward the situation haven't changed very much either. Perhaps the time has come for a change towards understanding and for concern.

John Schmidt

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Money available, but only 3 at NU

If the probability of the American Indian's success can be gauged by his enrollment numbers at the University of Nebraska, then it must be termed a dismal failure.

Currently, there are three American Indians among the 18,000-plus enrollment at the University this semester, according to records in the scholarship and financial aids office.

Administration officials are aware of the need to respond to this situation.

"Comparing the relatively large Indian population in the state to the few Indian students at the University indicates this need," says Dr. Harry J. Canon, director of the counseling service.

"BUT IT is unrealistic to bring Indians here, dump them into the system and hope that they survive," he added.

Indians come from a different cultural background. To be successful at the University, they need special introductory courses, special reading programs and tutorial assistance, he said.

Russel Brown of student affairs said that Indian youth are inclined to go to places offering programs which the University does not provide.

Finances are rarely a problem for an Indian who wants a college education.

"INDIANS, UNLIKE members of other minority groups, get all of the financial help they need from the federal government," said Dr. Edward Lundak, scholarship and financial aids director.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs provides loans and grants for tuition, fees, board and room, books and other expenses for any Indian high school graduate who needs assistance.

The only requirements are that the applicant be at least of one-fourth Indian blood, a member of a tribe served by the Bureau and living on an Indian reservation or other Indian-owned trust land.

"We did have one student who was unable to receive Bureau aid because he could not prove that he was an Indian. Our office helped him with an educational opportunity grant," Dr. Lundak said.

HE ADDED that the drop-out rate for Indian students is high and that he did not know of any who had stayed the full four years to receive their degree.

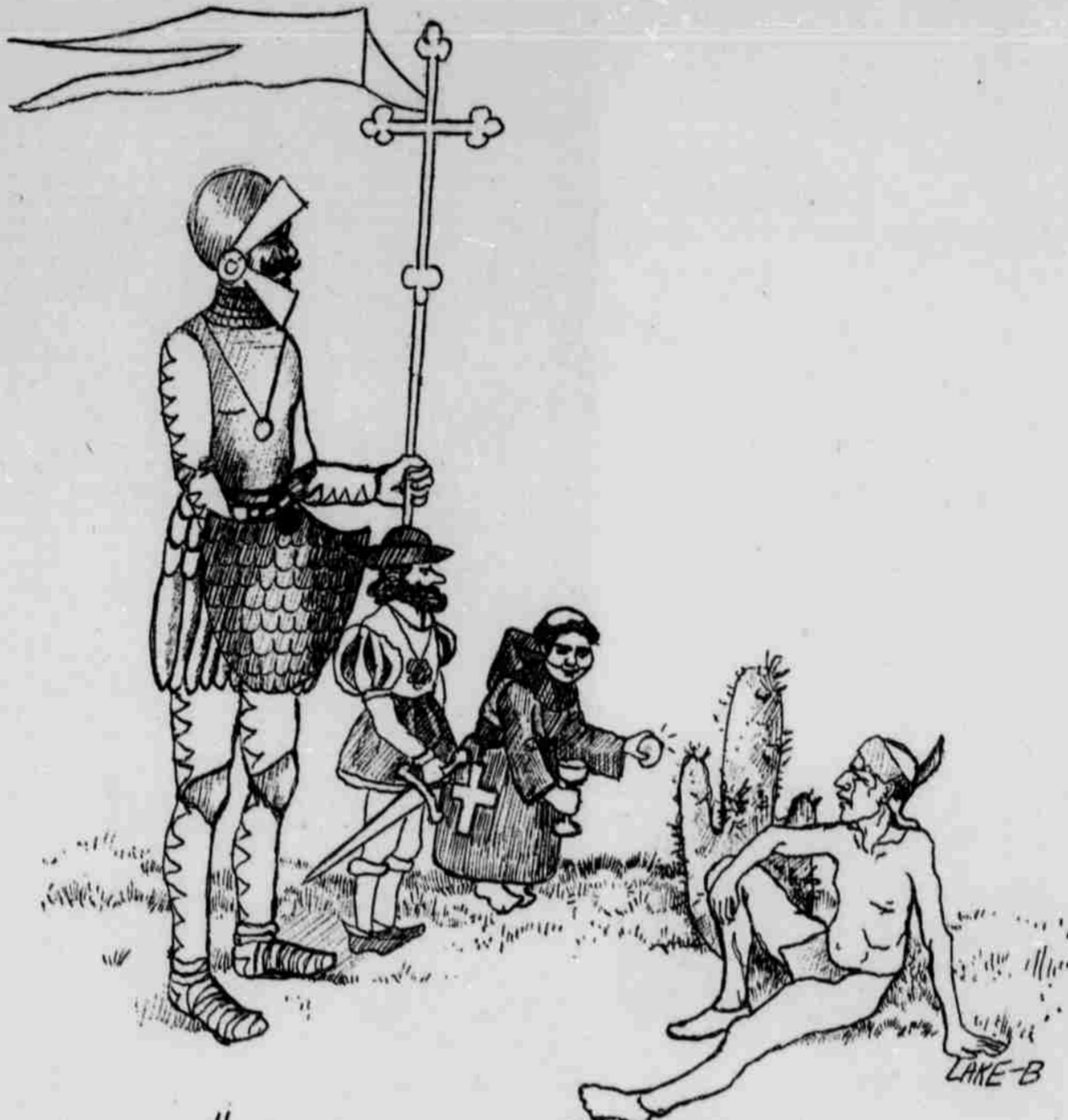
Bruce Miller, a graduate assistant at the counseling service, worked with the Omaha tribe at Macy, Neb., three years ago.

At that time, one or two Indians from the Macy area attended the University, he said, adding that many who do continue their education attend private Catholic colleges or the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kan.

Haskell Institute is one of five federal schools in the nation offering Indians vocational-technical training beyond the high school level.

"MOST INDIANS lack the educational skills needed to succeed at the University. This is because their culture does not push education.

"They are not able to cope with the college pressures here. So they get lonely and go home. There is nothing here for them," he said.



"HONKIES"

Columbus misnamed only real Americans

by John Dvorak
 Nebraska Staff Writer

Misconceptions and tragedy fill the long history of the Indians — the only real Americans.

Even the very name of the race is a misnomer. When Columbus first set foot in the new world, he found an already established civilization. Thinking he had discovered India, Columbus named the people "Indians."

The popular nickname "redskins" or "redmen" is also invalid. Indian complexions vary from dark brown to yellow to white.

IN REALITY, the new world was discovered long before 1492. The Indians had inhabited the Americas for thousands of years. But they did not originate here. No one knows for sure where they came from.

The Indian migrated to America during the latter part of the Pleistocene glaciation, probably around ten to fifteen thousand years ago.

Scientists generally agree that the Indians spread south from the Alaska area into Mexico. Others went east of the Rockies, over the plains and towards the Atlantic.

OLIN C. BARJENBRUCH, a senior in anthropology who specializes in early Great Plains man, pointed out that little physical evidence exists to tell the story of these early Americans.

Apparently, the earliest inhabitants east of the Rockies were the Clovis People, groups of nomadic hunters. They lived primarily by killing mammoths.

Contrary to some modern opinion, these people were not dumb, said Donald J. Blakeslee, associate curator of the Anthropology Division of the State Museum. They knew what they were doing and were well adapted to their environment, continued Blakeslee.

Early nomadic hunters spread throughout the two Americas. Some Indians travelled all the way to Cape Horn; others settled further north in South America. Indians crossed the Mississippi and formed tribes which eventually became the great Iroquois of New York and Cherokees of the Appalachians.

New social organizations were also emerging. The gathering of food became more common, although hunting was by no means outmoded.

Around the time of Christ, the first evidence of corn cultivation appeared with the "Plains Woodland" people. Although this was the first sign of agriculture in the plains region, Barjenbruch noted, hunting as a way of life still flourished.

AROUND 900 AD, village people began permanent settlements, although they spent part of each year on hunting trips.

A popular notion is that Indians, throughout history, were always savage warlike creatures. Blakeslee quickly dispelled that legend.

Early settlements were scattered, small and unfortified, which probably means that warfare was not of major importance. In some areas, however, settlements were fortified with dry moats and palisades.

Nor was the Indian an ignorant person, capable only of shooting a bow and arrow as some people believe, Blakeslee said. Indian dwellings of that time should disprove that. Dugout lodges, forerunners of the earthen lodges were constructed.

While the farmers of the east were beginning to construct earthworks and mounds, the farmers of the Southwest had already built their own buildings in caves and on ledges of rock. These early dwellings preceded the greater community apartment building such as the famous cliff apartments at Mesa Verde, Colorado.

Throughout the United States, as well as on the Great Plains, hundreds of Indian tribes were making rapid advances in all phases of life. Weapons, as well as warfare, were perfected. Agriculture and hunting procedures were refined and tools were modified and improved.

Disaster struck in the 16th century. White men came to America to stay. The seeds for the eventual downfall of the Indians were sown.

THE SPANISH first landed in the southern parts of North America. The English built settlements in New England.

With the new Americans came guns and horses . . . and trouble. European diseases, for which the

Indians had no immunity, struck the Indians. Large portions of many Indian villages succumbed. White men introduced the Indians to liquor.

Originally, the Indians were trusting and amiable to white settlers. But white men began to push westward from New England and northward from Mexico. Indian territory, once comprising two entire continents, was being slowly compressed.

THE CRUELTY and rapacity of some whites antagonized and embittered the Indians. Often violent action was to drive or scare the white interlopers away from territory which the Indians considered theirs by right of prior occupation.

Television and the fiction writer have created the image of the screaming Indian war party sweeping down on unknowing and innocent settlers.

Actually, it was white men who introduced killing on a massive scale to many of the Indian tribes, Blakeslee commented.

Before the coming of the whites, warfare was highly developed among the Indians, but killing often did not play a large part in it. Blakeslee said the Indians considered merely hitting an enemy more honorable than killing. Sometimes deaths occurred, but bloody battles and massacres were scarce.

AS THE SETTLERS pushed west, bringing with them a new way of life, problems increased. In essence the trouble was that the whites thought the Indians were "simple savages," according to Barjenbruch. This was not true.

Some Indian cultures were highly advanced. Architecture and art styles among the more advanced groups rivaled anything in existence at that time. Some Indians had a complicated social organization. Religion was important to their lives. They had ancient music and oral traditions.

The coming of the white man disrupted everything and forced the Indians to change their ways of life. As white men desired more land, the government tried to push the Indians onto reservations and consciously made them dependent on federal handouts.

NATURALLY the Indians resisted with all means available. War, scalping, killing, tragedy.

White men conducted campaigns to contain the Indians. One time, the army started a prairie fire from Denver into Western Nebraska. At one point the fire burned to the Arkansas River. Little by little, with their food supply and home land gone, the Indians became federal dependents.

Following 1860, Indian uprisings spread throughout the west. Perhaps the last two great battles were the most tragic. In 1876 Colonel George Custer, with less than 300 men under his command, charged a heavily populated Indian village. Custer's force was annihilated.

THE TROUBLE IS, when the Indians defeated the whites, it was usually called a massacre, Blakeslee said. When the whites annihilated the Indians — it was called a victory.

Such a "victory" occurred in late 1890's, the last real fight of the Indian wars. The Battle of Wounded Knee took place about 30 miles north of Gordon, Nebraska. A large group of soldiers were sent to arrest a group of Indian braves, squaws and children. Someone fired a shot, and when the firing ceased most of the Indians were dead. Babies were sabred, women were ridden down by horses and the dead were buried in a mass grave. Only a few troopers suffered injuries.

With that defeat most Indian resistance to confinement on reservations died too.

