

Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian. These conferences were organized by Albert A. Smiley, of the Board of Indian Commissioners. All three groups were concerned with the plight of the Indian and with "helping" him in his relations to white society. These groups were the driving force behind the Dawes Severalty (or General Allotment) Act of 1887.

This Allotment Act of 1887 is often (and rightly) discussed in terms of its direct or indirect intention to deprive the Indians of land. In brief, the Act was to divide tribal land into parcels and assign these to individual Indians, with full title and citizenship to devolve to them in twenty-five years. "Excess" land left after allotment was opened to homesteading by whites. In view of (1) the clamor in support of the Act by Congressional Representatives from areas where there was pressure for Indian lands, (2) the fact that, in general, this Act was not implemented on Indian reservations where surrounding whites had no desire for the lands, and (3) subsequent events in which Indian lands were reduced from 138 million acres to approximately fifty-two million acres, it seems clear that at least one consideration on the part of some lawmakers in passing and implementing the General Allotment Act was depriving the Indian of his lands.

This does not, however, explain the support the Act received from those who genuinely considered themselves acting in behalf of the Indian. One reason for such support lay in the belief that it was the best of two unfortunate alternatives—that individual ownership of land by the Indians would at least place some limit on white depredations, whereas without allotment all might be lost. Another reason, more relevant here, was the belief that through individual land ownership the Indian would best adjust to the dominant American society. To this end of "civilizing" the Indian, the General Allotment Act provided for both individual ownership of land and instruction for the Indians in the arts of agriculture and animal husbandry.

It has been argued in various quarters that failure of the Indians to take to farming is attributable to the incompatibility between the Indian's values and beliefs (and the social organizational features accompanying these values and beliefs), on the one hand, and the requirements of agriculture, on the other. This was doubtless an important element in the failure of the attempt to implement farming, and bears out the need often cited in this report for taking into account the values and belief systems of the Indians. However, in the case of the General Allotment Act, it is extremely important to note that the technical assistance proffered to the Indians was wholly inadequate even to the task of teaching a people desirous of farming.¹

Later in this report we will deal further with the alignment of technical assistance programs with indigenous value systems. The current situation and the possibilities for action are complicated by the fact that in general Indian groups remember very clearly technical assistance which came with blatant disregard for their values. There has thus been established in many places hostility to such assistance (and to its sources) which is now very much an element in the situation which CAP operations confront.

In the period between the General Allotment Act of 1887 and passage of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934 there were changes in Indian conditions, in public sentiment regarding the Indian, and in the character of legislation concerning the Indian. The most important changes in Indian conditions were economic stabilization at a level of extreme poverty, and levelling out of population decline, with, by 1920, strong indications of an upturn. While population figures for the period are highly inexact, trends became sufficiently clear to indicate to the Federal Government that the Indian was not a "dying people" and that the poverty-without-prospects-of-change which characterized most reservations could not be dealt with by waiting for the Indians to die off.

In 1922-23 there was public controversy over the Bursham Lands Bill which led to its defeat, indicating for the first time that popular opinion was tending toward respect for Indian rights. It was the intention of the Bill to give white squatters on Indian lands perfect title to land they were using (which would have been particularly disadvantageous to the Pueblos of the Southwest). In 1923, the Committee of One Hundred, appointed by the Secretary of Interior to investigate the Pueblo land case, produced a report in which, for the first time, a majority "deplored the effort to obliterate the unique qualities of Indian cultures" (Hagen 1961:15).

Accompanying these changes in Indian conditions and in public and official sentiment about the Indian was an increase in knowledge about the socio-economic

¹ See Meriam (1928: Chapter 1 passim).