We Don't Want White Romanticism



Kahntineta Horn

Dear Editor:

If I was a lover of my pictures the masterpiece with Chief Dan

George in "The Gateway" would have thrilled me and I am asking photographer John Hushagen it ! can buy a print of that excellent picture which makes your paper memorable to me.

However I feel that you make a serious mistake when you talk about "standing ovations" as a mark of approval or achievement in my work concerning Indians. You will be interested in that I carefully wrote a very inspired, humorous address of no social or economic value and I delivered it to an audience and received a real ovation. They did not really know what they were applauding but they liked the sound, they liked how they felt after they listened to me and they liked me and I have said nothing of value whatever.

When I spoke in Edmonton my remarks called for educational bodies giving serious thought to the fact that Indians have missed the thousands of years of competitive evolution of people of other races and for that reason may not be expected to enter into competition in a white mans world.

So I feel that the first obligation of education is to allow the Indian to survive, not to progress or contribute to society, or to take his "rightful place" as we are told.

Instead Indians have an obligation to live not die. That is what the education must train them for. After that they can go into such luxuries as "contribution" "rightful place" and such like. All of this is not their obligation to their people--just to live and multiply I certainly do not agree that

Canadian people should be allowed to decide the fate of Indians. No one has the right to sentence innocent people to death, if that is the verdict the Canadian people would pronounce as would seem to be their right.

What I seek is realism in the approach to educating Indians, not romanticism of any of the notions that fit so badly on the mind of the First People.

Your reporter missed the point entirely concerning the fact that people of the Jewish faith have achieved so much educationally while Indians with the same number have not done so. Quite obviously there are very different racial gifts, and very different environmental influences which will continue to develop more and more professional men among the people of the Jewish 250,000 and less and less among the Indian 250,000 in Canada.

The education which has been applied to Indians in Canada for 100 years has produced virtually no professional men--for example--despite the experts viewpoint the 8,000 Indians in and around Caughnwaga cannot ever hope to pass in French in school. Try that any way you like but the answer is simple. They cannot. It is not a case of they do not want to, or refuse to do so, but simply they mechanically and mentally cannot. These are factors which must be accepted because 100 years of proof back this up. And when accepted these facts must be used.

When I come to Edmonton again I won't give one of my charming, ovation getting joke-loaded addresses. Next time I will likely give you more facts of life which will never earn standing ovations unless you make it a point to applaud agony, frustration, failure.

Kahntineta Horn

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