

I think it important, however, to lay before you as much as I know concerning this custom, for it seems to me that upon the thorough eradication of its principles from the Indian mind depends, humanly speaking, the permanency of the results of our work. This I hope to make evident as I proceed.

I would first of all say what the Potlatch is not. It is generally described as a custom, but it is not a custom in the ordinary sense of the word, it is much more. We cannot label it as a habit or usage, it is something quite different; it is very far from being a festival, although to the outsider it may appear as such; it is not a religious rite or ceremony, even though there may seem to be a strain of ancestral worship in it; it is neither an amusement nor an entertainment, however much those who practice it may seek to represent it in that light.

Now, if it may not be classed as a custom, practice or habit; if it may not be regarded as a festival, religious rite or ceremony; if it be neither an amusement nor an entertainment, what is it? I reply it is a systematized form of tribal government based upon the united suffrages of the clans.

Potlatch is not merely the making of a feast where a dance is given and presents made to those attending. If that were all it would be harmless enough, but that is only the outward expression of it. The Potlatch is political as far as this life and this world concern the Indian, and the