

THIS WAY LIES HOPE

The Bureau ought to be taken out of a department overloaded with interests in no wise kindred to it, and made as independent as the Isthmian Canal Commission, which, like the Bureau, is expected to finish a specific work and then die. As it is now, the protection of the Indians' property is so much more in line with the other activities of the department as to absorb most of the time and thought which ought to be given to the Indian as a human being.

The Commissioner's salary should be large enough to attract a business man of approved ability and experience, and his lieutenants, well paid and well bonded, should relieve him of all responsibility except for general direction. Thus, one could take full charge of the accounts, another of the schools, others of the industrial concerns, the sanitary reforms, the inspection of outposts, and so on; the power to appoint, discipline, and remove them being lodged with the Commissioner.

Although given as nearly as practicable the absolute control of his Bureau, the Commissioner would still be subject always to summons from committees of Congress to answer questions or explain his conduct; but, in consideration of all this, he should receive his appropriations in lump sums—so much for educational, so much for sanitary purposes, and the like—having a free hand within those boundaries, and being required to report his expenditures.

The rule should be rigidly enforced against attaching legislation of a general character to any appropriation act. Every bill should carry its proper title and be formally submitted to the Commissioner, and his comments should be spread upon the record. Congress would still be as free as ever to enact laws in defiance of his advice—and shoulder the consequences.

The little wheels-within-wheels now existing in the Indian Bureau should be abolished, or confined to advisory functions. For example, the larger lumbering interests of the Indians should be handled by the federal Forest Service, and their larger irrigation interests by the Reclamation Service, and thus identified with the general public interests.

The Court of Claims, or a special branch of it, should be opened to the prosecution of any and all claims of Indians against the government, provided these claims are filed

before a certain date, say three years distant, and everything not presented within that time should be forever barred.

Finally, let the government take the back track on a policy which has been an incessant scandal-breeder. I refer to its assumption that every Indian must be a farmer. If any such rule were applied to the white man I should not be alive to write these lines, and it is no more sensible when applied to the Indian. Probably any Indian family can learn to raise a few potatoes and beans, and a little corn, on a garden-patch; but agriculture, as practised in the West today, with its large units of area, its expensive machinery, and its intricate water laws, taxes the best husbandry of the white man, and far exceeds that of the average Indian.

BUT WE ARE MAKING PAUPERS

How well the Indian realizes this was illustrated in a recent memorial of the Yakimas, an agricultural tribe, who say with touching candor:

"White man is better farmer than Indian. Indian only understands horses and cattle. Reclamation makes high cost water, high cost drainage. Indian cannot pay, and land be sold from under him. This is what white man want."

Nevertheless, the government goes on, year after year, tying to the neck of the Indian a farm of 80, or 160, or 320 acres, and warning him, "You must stay with this, and work it." The allotment looks generous, but half the time its only effect is to act as a weight to drag its owner down. If he has neither taste or talent for farming, why compel him to do that?

One day the immemorial policy of keeping the Indian in a condition of thinly disguised pauperism must end, and the sooner the end comes the more merciful for him and the better for the good name of the government as his trustee. When only the Indians who are fit to farm and want to farm are farming, when the multitude who take naturally to the mechanic arts are launched in trades, when those whom nature has not bent in any particular direction have entered upon the first stage of normal human development as hewers of wood and drawers of water, and those who are too old or too weak to work are frankly fed, clothed, and sheltered at the public expense, we may look for a more rapid upward movement by the race as a whole than it has ever yet made.