

P-246

Sutton
Indians

March 12, 1948

Mr. Ernest V. Sutton
1625 Oak Street
South Pasadena, California

Dear Mr. Sutton:

I am inclined to agree with you about the Indian hero and, in fact, with most of the points you make in your good letter of the 5th. If you will look at my books which I mentioned earlier, I think you will find the answers to most of the questions you have asked me more fully set forth than I can give them in a letter.

One must always remember two things in getting information from Indians: first, that they distrust instinctively those who come to them with credentials from the Indian Agent; second, that they will give a stranger the answers they think he wants them to give rather than take the chance of offending him or out of shy unwillingness to be questioned when he comes up, and particularly when he comes with the attitude, "Stand and tell". It takes a long time to gain the confidence of Indians. It is fatal giving them an idea of the information you want by asking a leading question. Never say, "Were Sitting Bull's eyes light in color?" Say, "What color were Sitting Bull's eyes?"

If your Black Elk is the Indian I know about, he is a dreamer, not a realist and the grandson of Sitting Bull cannot have seen his grandfather alive. Indians are wonderful eye witnesses, but regarding anything outside their own experience quite unreliable since they have no criteria by which to judge. I have included nothing in my book for which I could not find two living eye witnesses or documents of unquestioned authenticity.

Cordially yours,

W. S. CAMPBELL
("Stanley Vestal")

WSC:m

COPY