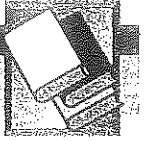


Primary Source Reading 8



The Native American Question

About the Selection Carl Schurz was secretary of the interior from 1877 to 1881. His department included the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Schurz did much to clean up corruption in the bureau. In 1881 he wrote a magazine article calling for fairer treatment of Native Americans. Ironically, his call for greater justice came at a time when most Native Americans were being restricted to reservations. Moreover, much of the Schurz solution to the "American Indian Problem"—which foreshadowed the later Dawes Act—did not appeal to many Native Americans.

Answers
these
also

→ Guided Reading

1. How does Schurz feel about the government's dealing with Native Americans?
2. Why are the Native Americans running out of places to live?

That the history of our Indian relations presents, in great part, a record of broken treaties, of unjust wars, and of cruel spoliation [plundering] is a fact too well known to require proof or to suffer denial. But it is only just to the government of the United States to say that its treaties with Indian tribes were, as a rule, made in good faith, and that most of our Indian wars were brought on by circumstances for which the government itself could not fairly be held responsible.

Of the treaties, those were the most important by which the government guaranteed to Indian tribes certain tracts of land as reservations to be held and occupied by them forever under the protection of the United States, in the place of other lands ceded by the Indians. There is no reason to doubt that in most, if not all, of such cases those who conducted Indian affairs on the part of the government, not anticipating the rapid advance of settlement, sincerely believed in the possibility of maintaining those reservations intact for the Indians, and that, in this respect, while their intentions were honest, their foresight was at fault. . . .

The Western country is rapidly filling up. A steady stream of immigration is following the railroad lines and then spreading to the right and left. The vacant places still existing are either worthless or will soon be exposed to the same invasion. The plains are being occupied by cattle raisers, the fertile valleys and bottomlands by agriculturists, the mountains by miners. What is to become of the Indians? . . .

What we can and should do is, in general terms, to fit the Indians, as much as possible, for the habits and occupations of civilized life by work and education; to individualize them in the possession and

appreciation of property by allotting to them lands in severalty [individual possession], giving them a fee simple title individually to the parcels of land they cultivate, inalienable for a certain period, and to obtain their consent to a disposition of that part of their lands which they cannot use, for a fair compensation, in such a manner that they no longer stand in the way of the development of the country as an obstacle, but form part of it and are benefited by it. . . .

But we should not indulge in the delusion that the problem can be solved by merely conferring upon them rights they do not yet appreciate and duties they do not yet understand. Those who advocate this seem to think that the Indians are yearning for American citizenship, eager to take it if we will only give it to them. No mistake could be greater. An overwhelming majority of the Indians look at present upon American citizenship as a dangerous gift, and but few of the more civilized are willing to accept it when it is attainable. And those who are uncivilized would certainly not know what to do with it if they had it. The mere theoretical endowment of savages with rights which are beyond their understanding and appreciation will, therefore, help them little. They should certainly have that standing in the courts which is necessary for their protection. But full citizenship must be regarded as the terminal not as the initial point of their development.

The first necessity, therefore, is not at once to give it to them but to fit them for it. And to this end, nothing is more indispensable than the protecting and guiding care of the government during the dangerous period of transition from savage to civilized life.

Source: Carl Schurz, "Present Aspects of the Indian Problem," *The North American Review*, July 1881.

Analyzing the Reading

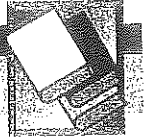
1. According to Schurz, how do Native Americans feel about American citizenship?

2. What does Schurz mean by making Native Americans “fit” for citizenship?

CRITICAL THINKING

3. **Evaluating Information** What does Schurz propose should be done regarding land for the Native Americans? How does he show insensitivity toward Native American cultural values?

Secondary Source Reading 9



The Hard Life of Farmers

About the Selection Hamlin Garland was born in Wisconsin and spent much of his youth in the agricultural areas of his native state, Iowa, and in South Dakota. When he became a novelist and short story writer, he turned to the hardships of farmers on the Great Plains as his central theme. In this excerpt from *A Son of the Middle Border*, Garland returns home to visit old friends and neighbors. He describes the hard, tedious life of trying to make a living on the land, and he captures the desire of rural people to see the wonders of the large cities.

Answer
also

Guided Reading

1. How did Garland come to understand the difficulties of farm life?
2. What did the men, women, girls, and boys confide to Garland?

Every house I visited had its individual message of sordid [miserable] struggle and half-hidden despair. Agnes had married and moved away to Dakota. And Bess had taken upon her girlish shoulders the burdens of wifehood and motherhood. . . . In addition to the work of being cook and scrub-woman, she was now a mother and nurse. As I looked around upon her worn chairs, faded rag carpets, and sagging sofas, the bare walls of her pitiful little house seemed a prison. I thought of her as she was in the days of her radiant girlhood, and my throat filled with rebellious pain.

All the gilding [bright surface] of farm life melted away. The hard and bitter realities came back upon me in a flood. Nature was as beautiful as ever. The soaring sky was filled with shining clouds. . . . A mystical sheen was on the odorous

[fragrant] grass and waving grain. But no splendor of cloud, no grace of sunset could conceal the poverty of these people. On the contrary, [the beauties of nature] brought out . . . the gracelessness of these homes and . . . the mechanical daily routine of these lives. . . .

Men who were growing bent in digging into the soil spoke to me of their desire to see something of the great eastern world before they died. Women whose eyes were faded and dim with tears listened to me with almost breathless interest [while] I told them of the great cities I had seen. . . . Young girls expressed to me their longing for a life which was better worthwhile. And lads, eager for adventure and excitement, confided to me their secret intention to leave the farm at the earliest moment. . . .

Source: Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishing Co. from *Son of the Middle Border* by Hamlin Garland. Copyright 1917 by Hamlin Garland, renewed 1945 by Mary I. Lord and Constance Garland. All rights reserved.

Analyzing the Reading

1. What responsibilities did Bess have?

2. To what did Garland contrast the beauty of nature?

CRITICAL THINKING

3. Drawing Conclusions What conclusion did Garland draw about farm life?
