



Full Speed Ahead – Damn the Torpedoes! (STUDIES IN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES)

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“Full Speed Ahead – Damn the Torpedoes!”

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In China they have a saying that crisis represents (also) opportunity. This has come together in the famous Chinese character.

The news from the US could hardly be more bleak. I picked up details from the library of Kobe University – Fukae campus. Jeff Weise (16) took his grandfather's gun, (he was a policeman) shot him and with it his partner. Afterwards, he found his way over to his school – Red Lake High and there proceeded to shoot dead a security guard, then one of his teachers', finally and systematically five of his fellow school children. He was reported to have been giggling. His last gesture, as seems common in these increasing common cases, he shot himself.

This was the first such murder since the infamous killings at Columbine in 1999. America, put up a plaintive “Why!!” Nobody could really offer an explanation. What could they say? It was noted that Jeff had begun sporting his dark hair wove together into devil's horns and further, Jeff had imbibed - via the Internet - the bile of Nazism. The boy was also being dosed, as advised by concerned experts, on major doses of *Prozac*. There was something else. Jeff was *Ojibewe* Indian, and the school was on the Red Lake Indian Reservation. The First Nations in America had, to some extent, felt isolated from these otherwise “white” plagues.

It was this, the Indian connection which caught my eye.

For the last 15years I have been immersed in a research project and first expounded in the pages of this journal. Essentially, I set out to find answer to the on-going tragedies and violence, which so pre-dominate throughout Indian Country and beyond. I met some success, and the succeeded with KUMM students in making what I maintain is the first step of healing. That being - and most nobly - that a US Government agency, cleared by the White House of President William Jefferson Clinton; so by order emitting from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington D.C., they joined the KUMM students and thus orchestrated the US Apology. Words ran like these

“... Cowardly killing of the woman and children ...” and on for 3 and a half pages. It was remarkable.

These words emerged, and from a special place, a Korean War Army tent and so placed on Point Barrow to become a part of the ‘Last Actions of the 20th Century.

Singularly important; this most honourable gesture represents a first step of healing. And the greatness of the US in making this gesture, in such graphic terms, is not to be forgotten. It represented, I felt, a new maturity of this young and mighty country. It was not however, not quite to last, for I was saddened to learn that the words of the gesture were purged from the US Department of the Interior website, along with their healing message. So, in respect to this, there appears at the end the full text.

With great good fortune, the unsworded gesture, we got it on film. They will in due course appear as part to a TV documentary that I have just, in recent weeks, produced. It will be put into Japanese and I hope to be ready to show at Kobe University later this year. Its Japanese title is ‘*The Shosen Spirit.*’ We will try to place it on the NHK later next year.

This visual representation of what we achieved is crucial, for without it nothing seems to be able to gel. Little in this world seems able to reach the popular culture, unless it is in a visual format. The importance of this film is that, in essence, it gives a new direction for Indian Peoples, one of survival, one of hope.

The challenge ahead: I plan to move this summer 2005 and try to get in touch with the reservation leadership and go the Red Lake Reservation, it’s in Minnesota. This will not be easy, the *Ojibwe*, not unreasonably do not want outsiders. After all they did everything they were told ‘by experts’ and look what happened ...

A student searched the www and came up with might be the Lyons: Horror and hope at Red Lake Nation by *Ojibwe* academic Scott Richard Lyons of Syracuse University. I have left messages. I have also written to the former head of the BIA, Professor Kevin Gover. He is currently at the State University of Arizona at Tempe, Arizona, and it was he who wrote the famous Apology.

If I can get linked with the reservation I will lead a flagged march, with some of my Japanese/Asian students, as possible, from Kobe University. We will

walk from the scene of the first shooting - grandfather's - house and to the high school. There I will issue a direction for hope, and for cultural survival. Film-maker Franka Randall, 111 will be on standby and we may have material for another documentary, depending assuredly upon the wishes of the Red Lake *Ojibwe* First Nation.

The intellectual power of what I represent is large; officially one of the 300 or so ideas that could change America. I carry, when over there, a special and rather rare USA Homeland Department document. There maybe no other Associate Professor in Japan with such credentials. It may be close to unknown in the Japan academic community. On the minus side I have no financial heft; all my funds (private) have been consumed by the film production. Time is very short. I have no option but to steam on and those entitle this paper --

“Full Speed Ahead - Damn the Torpedoes!”

Read on Point Barrow, Alaska during the final actions of the 20th Century / 2nd millennium. 23rd January 2001 at Siqinnaatchiaq when the new sun returned , by BIA , Alaska director Niles Cesar, supported by BIA Fairbanks director Sam Dimientieff.

“In March of 1824, President James Monroe established the office of Indian Affairs in the Department of War. Its mission was to conduct the nation's business with regard to Indian Affairs.

It is appropriate that we do in the first year of a new century and a new millennium, a time when our leaders are reflecting on what lies ahead. And preparing for those challenges. Before looking ahead, though, this institution must first look back and reflect on what it has wrought and, by doing so, come to know that thus in no occasion for celebration; rather it is a time for reflection and contemplation, a time for sorrowful truths to be spoken, a time for contrition.

We must first reconcile ourselves to the fact that the works of this agency have at various times profoundly harmed the communities that it was meant to serve. From then very beginning, the Office of Indian affairs was an instrument by which the United States enforced its ambition against the Indian people who stood in its path. And so, the first mission of this institution was to execute the removal of the southeastern tribal nations. By threat, deceit, and force, these great tribal nations were made to march a 1,000 miles to the west, leaving thousands of their old, their young and their infirm in hasty graves along the Trail of Tears.

As the nation looked to the West for more land, this agency participated in the ethnic cleansing that befell the western tribes. War necessarily begets tragedy; the war for the West was no exception. Yet, in these more enlightened times, it must be acknowledged that the deliberate spread of disease, the decimation of the mighty bison herds, the use of poison alcohol to destroy mind and body, and the cowardly killing of woman of children made for tragedy on a scale so ghastly that it cannot be dismissed as merely the inevitable consequence of the clash of competing ways of life. This agency and the good peoples in it failed the mission to prevent the devastation. And so great nations of patriot warriors fell. We will never push aside the memory of unnecessary and violent death at places such as Sand Creek, the banks of the Washita River, and Wounded knee.

Nor did the consequences of war have to include the futile and destructive efforts to annihilate Indian cultures. After the devastation of tribal economies and the deliberate creation of tribal dependence on the services provided by this agency, this agency set out to destroy all things Indian.

This agency forbade the speaking of Indian languages, prohibited the practice of traditional religious activities, outlawed traditional government and made Indian peoples ashamed of who they were. Worst of all, the Bureau of Indian affairs committed these acts against the children entrusted to its boarding schools, brutalizing them emotionally, psychologically, physically and spiritually. Even in this era of self-determination, when the Bureau of Indian Affairs is at long last serving as an advocate for Indian Peoples in an atmosphere of mutual respect, the legacy of these misdeeds haunts us. The trauma of shame, fear and anger has passed from one generation to the next, and manifests itself in the rampant alcoholism, drug abuse and domestic violence that plague Indian country. Many of our peoples live lives of unrelenting tragedy as Indian families suffer the ruin of lives by alcoholism, suicides made of shame and despair, and violent death at the hands of one another. So many of the maladies suffered today in Indian country result from the failure of this agency. Poverty, ignorance, and disease have been a product of this agency's work.

And so today I stand before you as the leader of an institution that in the past has committed acts so terrible that they infect, diminish and destroy the lives of Indian people decades later, generations later. These things occurred despite the efforts of many good people with good hearts who sort to prevent them. These wrongs must be acknowledged if the healing is to begin.

I do not speak today for the United States. This is the province of the nation's elected leaders, and I would not presume to speak on their behalf. I am empowered, however, to speak on behalf of this agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and I am quite certain that the words that follow reflect the hearts of its 10,000 employees.

Let us begin by expressing our profound sorrow for what this agency has done in the past. Just like you, when we think of these misdeeds and their tragic consequences, our hearts break and our grief is a pure and complete as yours. We desperately wish that we could change this history, but of course we cannot. On behalf of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I extend this formal apology to Indian people for the historical conduct of this agency.

And while the BIA employees of today did not commit these wrongs, we acknowledge that the institution we serve did. We accept this inheritance, this legacy of racism and inhumanity. And by accepting this legacy, we accept the moral responsibility of putting things right.

We therefore begin this important work anew, and make a new commitment to the people and communities that we serve, a commitment born of dedication we share with you to the cause of renewed hope and prosperity for Indian country. Never again will this agency stand silent when hate and violence are committed against Indians. Never again will we allow policy to proceed from the assumption that Indians possess less human genius than the other races. Never again will we be complicit in the theft of Indian property. Never again will we appoint false leaders who serve purposes other than those of the tribes. Never again will we allow unflattering stereotypical images of Indian people to deface the halls of government or lead the American people to shallow and ignorant beliefs about Indians. Never again will we attack you're your religions, your languages, your rituals, or any of your tribal ways. Never again will we seize your children, nor teach them to be ashamed of who they are. Never again.

We cannot ask your forgiveness, not while the burdens of this agency's history weigh so heavily on tribal communities. What we do ask is that, together, we allow the healing to begin: As you return to your homes, and as you talk to your people, please tell them that the time of dying is at its end. Tell your children that the time of shame and fear is over. Tell your young men and woman to replace their anger with hope and love for their people. Together we must wipe the tears of seven generations. Together, we must allow our broken hearts to mend. Together we will face a challenging world with confidence and trust. Together, let us resolve that when our future leaders gather to discuss the history of this institution, it will be a time to celebrate the rebirth of joy, freedom and progress for the Indian Nations. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was born in 1824 in a time of war on Indian people. May it live in the year 2000 and beyond as an instrument of their prosperity."

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[First spoken by Assistant Secretary of the Interior - Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., at the Ceremony Acknowledging the 175 Anniversary of the Establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs / September 8, 2000]