



pieces by

Vine

on

Deloria Jr

indians & anthropologists

Anthropologists and Other Friends

INTO EACH LIFE, it is said, some rain must fall. Some people have bad horoscopes, others take tips on the stock market. McNamara created the TFX and the Edsel. Churches possess the real world. But Indians have been cursed above all other people in history. Indians have anthropologists.

Every summer when school is out a veritable stream of immigrants heads into Indian country. Indeed the Oregon Trail was never so heavily populated as are Route 66 and Highway 18 in the summer time. From every rock and cranny in the East they emerge, as if responding to some primeval fertility rite, and flock to the reservations.

“They” are the anthropologists. Social anthropologists, historical anthropologists, political anthropologists, economic anthropologists, all brands of the species, embark on the great summer adventure. For purposes of this discussion we shall refer only to the generic name, anthropologists. They are the most prominent members of the scholarly community that infests the land of the free, and in the summer time, the homes of the braves.

The origin of the anthropologist is a mystery hidden in the historical mists. Indians are certain that all societies of the Near East had anthropologists at one time because all those societies are now defunct.

Indians are equally certain that Columbus brought anthropologists on his ships when he came to the New World. How else could he have made so many wrong deductions about where he was?

While their historical precedent is uncertain, anthropologists can readily be identified on the reservations. Go into any crowd of people. Pick out a tall gaunt white man wearing Bermuda shorts, a World War II Army Air Force flying jacket, an Australian bush hat, tennis shoes, and packing a large knapsack incorrectly strapped on his back. He will invariably have a thin sexy wife with stringy hair, an IQ of 191, and a vocabulary in which even the prepositions have eleven syllables.

He usually has a camera, tape recorder, telescope, hoola hoop, and life jacket all hanging from his elongated frame. He rarely has a

pen, pencil, chisel, stylus, stick, paint brush, or instrument to record his observations.

This creature is an anthropologist.

An anthropologist comes out to Indian reservations to make OBSERVATIONS. During the winter these observations will become books by which future anthropologists will be trained, so that they can come out to reservations years from now and verify the observations they have studied.

After the books are written, summaries of the books appear in the scholarly journals in the guise of articles. These articles “tell it like it is” and serve as a catalyst to inspire other anthropologists to make the great pilgrimage next summer.

The summaries are then condensed for two purposes. Some condensations are sent to government agencies as reports justifying the previous summer’s research. Others are sent to foundations in an effort to finance the next summer’s expedition west.

The reports are spread all around the government agencies and foundations all winter. The only problem is that no one has time to read them. So five-thousand-dollar-a-year secretaries are assigned to decode them. Since these secretaries cannot read complex theories, they reduce the reports to the best slogan possible and forget the reports.

The slogans become conference themes in the early spring, when the anthropologist expeditions are being planned. The slogans turn into battle cries of opposing groups of anthropologists who chance to meet on the reservations the following summer.

Each summer there is a new battle cry, which inspires new insights into the nature of the “Indian problem.” One summer Indians will be greeted with the joyful cry of “Indians are bilingual!” The following summer this great truth will be expanded to “Indians are not only bilingual, THEY ARE BICULTURAL!”

Biculturalism creates great problems for the opposing anthropological camp. For two summers they have been bested in sloganeering and their funds are running low. So the opposing school of thought breaks into the clear faster than Gale Sayers playing against the little leaguers. “Indians,” the losing “anthros” cry, “are a FOLK people!” The tide of battle turns and a balance, so dearly sought by Mother Nature, is finally achieved.

Thus go the anthropological wars, testing whether this school

or that school can endure longest. And the battlefields, unfortunately, are the lives of Indian people.

You may be curious as to why the anthropologist never carries a writing instrument. He never makes a mark because he ALREADY KNOWS what he is going to find. He need not record anything except his daily expenses for the audit, for the anthro found his answer in the books he read the winter before. No, the anthropologist is only out on the reservations to VERIFY what he has suspected all along-Indians are a very quaint people who bear watching.

The anthro is usually devoted to PURE RESEARCH. Pure research is a body of knowledge absolutely devoid of useful application and incapable of meaningful digestion. Pure research is an abstraction of scholarly suspicions concerning some obscure theory originally expounded in pre-Revolutionary days and systematically checked each summer since then. A 1969 thesis restating a proposition of 1773 complete with footnotes to all material published between 1773 and 1969 is pure research.

There are, however, anthropologists who are not as clever at collecting footnotes. They depend upon their field observations and write long adventurous narratives in which their personal observations are used to verify their suspicions. Their reports, books, and articles are called APPLIED RESEARCH. The difference, then, between Pure and Applied research is primarily one of footnotes. Pure has many footnotes, Applied has few footnotes. Relevancy to subject matter is not discussed in polite company.

Anthropologists came to Indian country only after the tribes had agreed to live on reservations and had given up their warlike ways. Had the tribes been given a choice of fighting the cavalry or the anthropologists, there is little doubt as to who they would have chosen. In a crisis situation men always attack the biggest threat to their existence. A warrior killed in battle could always go to the Happy Hunting Grounds. But where does an Indian laid low by an anthro go? To the library?

Behind each successful man stands a woman and behind each policy and program with which Indians are plagued, if traced completely back to its origin, stands the anthropologist.

The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are objects for observation, people are then considered objects for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction. The

anthropologist thus furnishes the justification for treating Indian people like so many chessmen available for anyone to play with.

The massive volume of useless knowledge produced by anthropologists attempting to capture real Indians in a network of theories has contributed substantially to the invisibility of Indian people today. After all, who can conceive of a food-gathering, berry-picking, semi-nomadic, fire-worshipping, high-plains-and-mountain-dwelling, horse-riding, canoe-toting, bead-using, pottery-making, ribbon-coveting, wickiup-sheltered people who began flourishing when Alfred Frump mentioned them in 1803 in his great work on Indians entitled *Our Feathered Friends* as real?

Not even Indians can relate themselves to this type of creature who, to anthropologists, is the “real” Indian. Indian people begin to feel that they are merely shadows of a mythical super-Indian. Many anthros spare no expense to reinforce this sense of inadequacy in order to further support their influence over Indian people.

In Washington, bureaucrats and Congressmen are outraged to discover that this “berry-picking food gatherer” has not entered the mainstream of American society. Programs begin to shift their ideological orientation to cover the missing aspect which allowed the berry picker to “flourish.” Programs and the people they serve thus often have a hidden area of misunderstanding, which neither administrators nor recipients realize.

Over the years anthropologists have succeeded in burying Indian communities so completely beneath the mass of irrelevant information that the total impact of the scholarly community on Indian people has become one of simple authority. Many Indians have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists because it appears that the anthropologists know everything about Indian communities. Thus many ideas that pass for Indian thinking are in reality theories originally advanced by anthropologists and echoed by Indian people in an attempt to communicate the real situation.

Since 1955 there have been a number of workshops conducted in Indian country as a device for training “young Indian leaders.” Churches, white Indian-interest groups, colleges, and finally, poverty programs have each gone the workshop route as the most feasible means for introducing new ideas into younger Indians so as to create “leaders.”

The tragic nature of the workshops is apparent when one

examines their history. One core group of anthropologists, helpful in 1955 and succeeding years, has institutionalized the workshop and the courses taught in it. Trudging valiantly from workshop to workshop, from state to state, college to college, tribe to tribe, area to area, these noble spirits have served as the catalyst for the creation of workshops which are identical in purpose and content and often in the student body itself.

The anthropological message to young Indians has not varied a jot or tittle in ten years. It is the same message these anthros learned as fuzzy-cheeked graduate students in the post-war years”—Indians are a folk people, whites are an urban people, and never the twain shall meet.

Derived from this basic premise have been such sterling insights as Indians are between two cultures, Indians are bicultural, Indians have lost their identity, and Indians are warriors. These insights, propounded every year with deadening regularity and an overtone of Sinaitic authority, have come to occupy a key block in the development of young Indian people. For these slogans have come to be excuses for Indian failures. They are crutches by which young Indians have avoided the arduous task of thinking out the implications of the status of Indian people in the modern world.

Indian Affairs today suffers from an intellectual stagnation that is astounding. Creative thought is sparse. Where the younger black students were the trigger to the Civil Rights movements with sit-ins in the South, young Indians have become unwitting missionaries spreading ancient anthropological doctrines which hardly relate to either anthropology or to Indians. The young blacks invented Black Power and pushed the whole society to consider the implications of discrimination which in turn created racial nationalism. Young Indians have barely been able to parody some black slogans and have created none of their own.

If there is one single cause which has importance today for Indian people, it is tribalism. But creation of modern tribalism has been stifled by the ready acceptance of the “Indians-are-a-folk-people” premise of the anthropologists. Creative thought in Indian Affairs has not, therefore, come from younger Indians. Rather it has come from the generation of Indians supposedly brainwashed by government schools and derided as “puppets” of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Because other groups have been spurred on by their younger generation, Indians have come to believe that through education a new generation of leaders will arise to solve the pressing contemporary problems. Tribal leaders have been taught to accept this thesis by the scholarly community in its annual invasion of the reservations. Bureau of Indian Affairs educators harp continually on this theme. Wherever authority raises its head in Indian country, this thesis is its message.

The facts prove the opposite, however. Relatively untouched by anthropologists, educators, and scholars are the Apache tribes of the Southwest. The Mescalero, San Carlos, White Mountain, and Jicarilla Apaches have very few young people in college compared with other tribes. They have even fewer people in the annual workshop orgy during the summers. If ever there was a distinction between folk and urban, this group of Indians characterizes the revered anthropological gulf.

Concern among the Apaches is, however, tribal. There is little sense of a "lost identity." Apaches could not care less about the anthropological dilemmas that worry other tribes. Instead they continue to work on the massive plans for development which they themselves have created. Tribal identity is assumed, not defined, by the reservation people. Freedom to choose from a wide variety of paths of progress is a characteristic of the Apaches; they don't worry about what type of Indianism is "real." Above all, they cannot be ego-fed by abstract theories and hence unwittingly manipulated.

With many young people from other tribes the situation is quite different. Some young Indians attend workshops over and over again. Folk theories pronounced by authoritative anthropologists become opportunities to escape responsibility. If, by definition, the Indian is hopelessly caught between two cultures, why struggle? Why not blame all one's lack of success on this tremendous gulf between two opposing cultures? Workshops have become, therefore, summer retreats for non-thought rather than strategy sessions for leadership enhancement.

Herein lies the Indian sin against the anthropologist. Only those anthropologists who appear to boost Indian ego and expound theories dear to the hearts of workshop Indians are invited to teach at workshops. They become human recordings of social confusion which are played and replayed each summer to the delight of people

who refuse to move on into the real world.

The workshop anthro is thus a unique creature, partially self-created and partially supported by the refusal of Indian young people to consider their problems in their own context. The normal process of maturing has been confused with cultural difference. So maturation is cast aside in favor of cult recitation of great truths which appear to explain the immaturity of young people.

While the anthro is, in a very real sense, the victim of the Indians, he should nevertheless recognize the role he has been asked to play and refuse to play it. Instead, the temptation to appear relevant to a generation of young Indians has clouded his sense of proportion. Workshop anthros often ask Indians of tender age to give their authoritative answers to problems which an entire generation of Indians is just now beginning to solve. Thus, where the answer to reservation health problems may be adequate housing in areas where there has never been adequate housing, young Indians are shaped in their thinking processes to consider vague doctrines on the nature of man and his society.

It is very unsettling for a teen-age Indian to become an instant authority equal in status with the Ph.D. interrogating him. Yet the very human desire is to play that game every summer, for the status acquired in the game is heady. And as according to current rules of the game, answers can only be given in vocabulary created by the Ph.D., the entire leadership-training process internalizes itself and has no outlet beyond the immediate group. Real problems, superimposed upon the ordinary problems of maturing, thus become insoluble burdens that crush people of great leadership potential.

Let us take some specific examples. One workshop discussed the thesis that Indians were in a terrible crisis. They were, in the words of friendly anthro guides, BETWEEN TWO WORLDS. People between two worlds, the students were told, DRANK. For the anthropologists, it was a valid explanation of drinking on the reservation. For the young Indians, it was an authoritative definition of their role as Indians. Real Indians, they began to think, drank and their task was to become real Indians for only in that way could they re-create the glories of the past.

So they DRANK.

I lost some good friends who DRANK too much.

Abstract theories create abstract action. Lumping together the variety of tribal problems and seeking the demonic principle at work which IS destroying Indian people may be intellectually satisfying. But it does not change the real situation. By concentrating on great abstractions, anthropologists have unintentionally removed many young Indians from the world in which problems are solved to the lands of makebelieve.

Regardless of theory, the Pyramid Lake Paiutes and the Gila River Pima Maricopas are poor because they have been systematically cheated out of their water rights, and on desert reservations water is the most important single factor in life. No matter how many worlds Indians straddle, the Plains Indians have an inadequate land base that continues to shrink because of land sales. Straddling worlds is irrelevant to straddling small pieces of land and trying to earn a living.

Along the Missouri River the Sioux used to live in comparative peace and harmony. Although the allotments were small, families were able to achieve a fair standard of living through a combination of gardening and livestock raising and supplemental work. Little cash income was required because the basic necessities of food, shelter, and community life were provided.

After World War II anthropologists came to call. They were horrified that the Indians didn't carry on their old customs such as dancing, feasts, and giveaways. In fact, the people did keep up a substantial number of customs. But these customs had been transposed into church gatherings, participation in the county fair, and tribal celebrations, particularly fairs and rodeos.

The people did Indian dances. BUT THEY DIDN'T DO THEM ALL THE TIME.

Suddenly the Sioux were presented with an authority figure who bemoaned the fact that whenever he visited the reservations the Sioux were not out dancing in the manner of their ancestors. In a real sense, they were not real.

Today the summers are taken up with one great orgy of dancing and celebrating as each small community of Indians sponsors a weekend pow-wow for the people in the surrounding communities. Gone are the little gardens which used to provide fresh vegetables in the summer and canned goods in the winter. Gone are the chickens which provided eggs and Sunday dinner. In the winter the

situation becomes critical for families who spent the summer dancing. While the poverty programs have done much to counteract the situation, few Indians recognize that the condition was artificial from start to finish. The people were innocently led astray and even the anthropologists did not realize what had happened.

Another beautiful example of nonsensical scholarly dribble that has had a great effect on Indians' lives was an event that happened in the summer of 1968. A proposal was written to solve the desperate credit needs of reservation communities. Without a sufficient amount of capital to begin small businesses, no area can achieve economic stability. Tribes had sought a credit bill in Congress for ten years without any noticeable movement in the two Interior committees.

So a scheme was devised in a place far from Indian country to make use of existing funds in the community to generate credit within the reservation for use by the people. The basic document stated that like all undeveloped areas, Indian reservations have a great deal of *HOARDED* wealth. The trick, according to this group of experts, was to gain the Indians' confidence, get them to bring their hoarded wealth from hiding, and make them invest that wealth in reservation banks, mutual funds, and small businesses.

I could not believe the proposition myself. I had visited a great many reservations and seen the abject poverty, most of its cause directly attributed to the refusal by Congress to provide credit or to bureaucratic ineptness. I had served on the Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States and had been shaken at what we had found, not only in Indian reservations, but in rural America generally. If there was hoarded wealth on those reservations, it was very well hidden!

Yet people I talked with concerning the idea were pretty much convinced that the authors of the document had hit the nail on the head. Some yearned to get the program going to see what could be done on specific reservations. One reservation suggested had had employment only once before in this century. That was during the Depression, when CCC camps were put up on the reservation and conservation was used to provide employment for the people. That era lasted about three or four years and then World War II forced cancellation of the camps.

I could not be convinced that wages earned in the CCC camps

had been carefully preserved through the great blizzard of 1949, through the Korean War, through the prosperous days of the 1950s, through the Vietnam struggle, and were now gathering mildew in their hiding places beneath the dirt floors of the log cabins on the reservation. The proposal was designed for the days of Silas Marner in merry old England, when the industrial revolution was just beginning to reach into the countryside.

One hopes that the project has been dropped. To be kindly, it was unrealistic from the very inception. But in my mind's eye I can still visualize what the scene would be as one of its proponents described it to me.

From every nook and cranny, from every butte and mesa, Indians came swarming into Pine Ridge, South Dakota. In wagons and old cars they came, afoot and astride their ponies. Into the agency they moved, a relentless stream of investors. At a table sat two accountants and a distinguished economist, recording each family's investment in a massive bank deposit book. Gradually the little leather pouches were piled higher and higher as thousands of dollars of coin of the realm once again greeted the sun.

Rare coin collectors stood off to the side, looking for large greenbacks, Spanish doubloons, and Greek drachmas, hidden since pre-Colonial times. Occasionally a Viking coin, evidence of Leif Ericson's tourist activities, came to the table, greeted by opposing scholars as authentic and counterfeit as ideology dictated. With pleased looks the economists, anthropologists, and other scholars stood observing the scene. At last, they chortled, Indians were in the mainstream of American life.

I do not place much faith in well-footnoted proposals.

One of the wildest theories, to my way of thinking, has been advocated by some very dear friends of mine. Since we cuss and discuss the theory with monotonous regularity, I feel free to outline my side of the controversy. Their side has had the benefit of publication in scholarly journals for years.

The Oglala Sioux are perhaps the most famous of the Sioux bands. Among their past leaders were Red Cloud, the only Indian who ever defeated the United States in a war, and Crazy Horse, most revered of the Sioux war chiefs. The Oglala were, and perhaps still are, the meanest group of Indians ever assembled. They would take after a cavalry troop just to see if their bow strings were taut enough.

After they had settled on the reservation, the Oglalas made a fairly smooth transition to the new life. They had good herds of cattle, they settled along the numerous creeks that cross the reservation, and they created a very strong community spirit. The Episcopalians and the Roman Catholics had the missionary franchise on the reservation and the tribe was pretty evenly split between the two. In the Episcopal church, at least, the congregations were fairly self-governing and stable.

During the years since the reservation was created, members of other tribes came to visit and ended up as residents. Dull Knife's Cheyennes hid at Pine Ridge for a while and a group of them came to be permanent residents. Osages, Kaws, and other Oklahoma tribes also had scattered families living on the reservation.

Over the years the Oglala Sioux have had a number of problems. Their population has grown faster than their means of support. The government allowed white farmers to come into the eastern part of the reservation and create a county, with the best farm lands owned or operated by whites. The reservation was allotted and when ownership became too complicated, control of the land passed out of Indian hands. The government displaced a number of Oglalas during the last world war by taking a part of the reservation for use as a bombing range to train crews for combat. Only in 1968 was the land returned to tribal and individual use.

The tribe became a favorite subject for study quite early because of its romantic past. Gradually theories arose attempting to explain the apparent lack of progress of the Oglala Sioux. The real issue, white control of the reservation, was overlooked completely. Instead, every conceivable intangible cultural distinction was used to explain lack of economic, social, and educational progress of a people who were, to all intents and purposes, absentee landlords because of the government policy of leasing their lands to whites.

One study advanced the startling proposition that Indians with many cattle were, on the average, better off than Indians without cattle. Cattle Indians, apparently, had more capital and income than did non-cattle Indians. The study had innumerable charts and graphs which demonstrated this great truth beyond doubt of a reasonably prudent man.

Studies of this type were common but unexciting. They lacked that certain flair of insight so beloved by anthropologists. Then one

day a famous anthropologist advanced the thesis, probably valid at the time and in the manner in which he advanced it, that the Oglala were WARRIORS WITHOUT WEAPONS.

The chase was on.

From every library stack in the nation anthropologists converged on the innocent Oglala Sioux to test this new thesis before the ink dried on the scholarly journals. Outfitting the anthropological expeditions to Pine Ridge became the number one industry of the small off-reservation Nebraska towns south of Pine Ridge. Surely supplying the Third Crusade to the Holy Land was a minor feat compared with the task of keeping the anthropologists at Pine Ridge.

Every conceivable difference between the Oglala Sioux and the folks at Hyannisport was attributed to the quaint warrior tradition of the Oglala Sioux. From lack of roads to unshined shoes Sioux problems were generated, so the anthros discovered, by the refusal of the white man to recognize the great desire of the Oglalas to go to war. Why expect an Oglala to become a small businessman when he was only waiting for that wagon train to come around the bend?

The very real and human problems of the reservation were considered to be merely by-products of the failure of a warrior people to become domesticated. The fairly respectable thesis of past exploits in war, perhaps romanticized for morale purposes, became a demonic spiritual force all its own. Some Indians, in a tongue-in-cheek manner for which Indians are justly famous, suggested that a subsidized wagon train be run through the reservation each morning at 9 a.m. and the reservation people paid a minimum wage for attacking it.

By outlining this problem I am not deriding the Sioux. I lived eighteen years on that reservation and know many of the problems it suffers. How, I ask, can the Oglala Sioux make any headway in education when their lack of education is ascribed to a desire to go to war? Would not perhaps an incredibly low per capita income, virtually non-existent housing, extremely inadequate roads, and domination by white farmers and ranchers make some difference? If the little Sioux boy or girl had no breakfast, had to walk miles to a small school, and had no decent clothes and place to study in a one-room log cabin, should the level of education be comparable to New Trier High School?

What use would roads, houses, schools, businesses, income, be to a people that everyone expected would soon depart on the hunt or warpath? I would submit that a great deal of the lack of progress at Pine Ridge is occasioned by people who believe they are helping the Oglalas when they insist on seeing, in the life of the people of that reservation, only those things which they want to see. Real problems and real people become invisible before the great romantic notion that the Sioux yearn for the days of Crazy Horse and Red Cloud and will do nothing until those days return.

The logical conclusion of this rampage of “warrriorism” was the creation of a type of education that claimed to make “modern Indians” out of these warriors. I will not argue right or wrong about the process, since too few Indian people on the Sioux reservations have become acquainted with it, and many of those who have, accept it as the latest revelation from on high.

The question of the Oglala Sioux is a question that plagues every Indian tribe in the nation, if it will closely examine itself. Tribes have been defined as one thing, the definition has been completely explored, test scores have been advanced promoting and deriding the thesis, and finally the conclusion has been reached—Indians must be redefined in terms that white men will accept, even if that means re-Indianizing them according to a white man’s idea of what they were like in the past and should logically become in the future.

What, I ask, would a school board in Moline, Illinois, or Skokie, even, do if the scholarly community tried to reorient their educational system to conform with outmoded ideas of Sweden in the glory days of Gustavus Adolphus? Would they be expected to sing “*Ein Feste Burg*” and charge out of the mists at the Roman Catholics to save the Reformation every morning as school began?

Or the Irish? Would they submit to a group of Indians coming to Boston and telling them what a modern Irishman was like? Expecting them to dress in green and hunt leprechauns so as to live on the leprechaun’s hidden gold would hardly provide a meaningful path for the future.

Again let us consider the implications of theories put forward to solve the problems of poverty among the blacks. Several years ago the word went forth across the land that black poverty was due to the disintegration of the black family, that the black father no

longer had a prominent place in the home.

How incredibly short-sighted that thesis was. How typically Anglo-Saxon! How in the world could there have been a black family if people were sold like cattle for two hundred years, if there were large plantations that served merely as farms to breed more slaves, if white owners systematically ravaged black women? When did the black family unit ever become integrated? During the years of the grandfather clause, when post-Civil War Negroes were denied the vote because their grandfathers hadn't been eligible to vote? Thanks to the programs of the Ku Klux Klan?

Academia, and its by-products, continues to become more irrelevant to the needs of people. The rest of America had better beware of having little quaint mores that will attract anthropologists or it will soon become victim of the conceptual prison into which Indians have been thrown.

What difference does it make?

Several years ago an anthropologist stated that over a period of some twenty years he had spent, from all sources, close to ten million dollars studying a tribe of less than a thousand people! Imagine what that amount of money would have meant to that group of people had it been invested in buildings and businesses. There would have been no problems to study!

There lies the trap into which American society has fallen and into which we all unknowingly fall. There is an undefined expectation in American society that once a problem is defined, no matter how, and understood by a Significant number of people who have some relation to the problem, there is no problem any more.

Poverty programs are the best contemporary example of this thesis. The poor, according to Harrington, are characterized by their invisibility. Once that thesis was accepted, discussions of poverty made the poor so visible that eventually solutions to poverty replaced the visible poor and the poor faded once again into obscurity. And everyone was outraged to discover that three years of discussion and underfunded programs had not solved the problem of poverty.

In defense of the anthropologist it must be recognized that those who do not publish, perish. That those who do not bring in a substantial sum of research money soon slide down the scale of university approval. That university is not equally balanced

between the actual education of its students and a multitude of small bureaus, projects, institutes, and programs which are designated to harvest grants for the university?

The implications of the anthropologist, if not for all America, should be clear for the Indian. Compilation of Useless Knowledge "for knowledge's sake" should be utterly rejected by the Indian people. We should not be objects of observation for those who do nothing to help us. During the crucial days of 1954, when the Senate was pushing for termination of all Indian rights, not one single scholar, anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or economist came forward to support the tribes against the detrimental policy.

How much had scholars learned about Indians from 1492 to 1954 that would have placed termination in a more rational light? Why didn't the academic community march to the side of the tribes? Certainly the past few years have shown how much influence academia can exert when it feels impelled to enlist in a cause? Is Vietnam any more crucial to the moral stance of America than the great debt owed to the Indian tribes?

Perhaps we should suspect the real motives of the academic community. They have the Indian field well defined and under control. Their concern is not the ultimate policy that will affect the Indian people, but merely the creation of new slogans and doctrines by which they can climb the university totem pole. Reduction of people to ciphers for purposes of observation appears to be inconsequential to the anthropologist when compared with immediate benefits they can derive: the production of further prestige, and the chance to appear as the high priest of American society, orienting and manipulating to their hearts' desire.

A couple of years ago Roger Jourdain, chairman of the Red Lake Chippewa tribe of Minnesota, casually had the anthropologists escorted from his reservation. This was the tip of the iceberg breaking through into visibility. If only more Indians had the insight of Jourdain. Why should we continue to be the private zoos for anthropologists? Why should tribes have to compete with scholars for funds when the scholarly productions are so useless and irrelevant to real life?

I would advocate a policy to be adopted by Indian tribes which would soon clarify the respective roles of anthropologists and tribes. Each anthro desiring to study a tribe should be made to apply to the

tribal council for permission to do his study. He would be given such permission only if he raised as a contribution to the tribal budget an amount of money equal to the amount he proposed to spend in his study. Anthropologists would thus become productive members of Indian society instead of ideological vultures.

This proposal was discussed at one time in Indian circles. It curled no small number of anthropological hairdos. Irrational shrieks of “academic freedom” rose like rockets from launching pads. The very idea of putting a tax on useless information was intolerable to the anthros we talked with.

But the question is very simple. Are the anthros concerned about “freedom” or “license”? Academic freedom certainly does not imply that one group of people have to become chessmen for another group of people. Why should Indian communities be subjected to prying non-Indians any more than other communities? Should any group have a franchise to stick its nose into someone else’s business? No.

Realistically, Indian people will continue to allow their communities to be turned inside out until they come to realize the damage that is being done them. Then they will seal up the reservations until no further knowledge, useless or otherwise, is created. Thus the pendulum will swing radically from one extreme to another, whereas with understanding between the two groups it would not have to swing at all.

Recently, the world of the anthropologist has produced a book the influence of which will be very great. And very detrimental to Indian people. Perhaps when the implications of this book reach the tribes in the form of government programs, they will finally awaken and push the parasitic scholars off the reservations and set up realistic guidelines by which they can control what is written and said about them.

The book is called *Man’s Rise to Civilization as Shown by the Indians of North America from Primeval Times to the Coming of the Industrial State*. It exemplifies all the sacred innuendos by which Indians have been hidden from view over the years. The unexamined premises under which the book was written are many and the book will merely serve to reinforce existing stereotypes concerning Indians which have been so detrimental for years.

The explanation of the book, as found on the jacket, indicates sufficiently the assumptions under which the book was written. In the foreword, by Elman R. Service, Professor of Anthropology at Michigan, it is noted that "beginning with the most pitiful and primitive Indians found by explorers, the Digger Indians of Nevada and Utah, Mr. Farb shows that even they are much above the highest non-human primate." Thank you, Mr. Farb, we were pretty worried about that.

The back of the jacket describes Mr. Farb as having been acclaimed by Stewart Udall, former Secretary of the Interior, as "one of the finest conservation spokesmen of our period." This statement will raise the question in Indians' minds of who read the book to Stewart Udall.

Being acclaimed as a conservationist by Udall is not exactly gathering laurels either. Udall has allowed Pyramid Lake in Nevada to languish some eight years with a mere pittance of water although it is the finest natural water resource in the state. And although he has repeatedly promised the Pyramid Lake Paiute tribe water for the lake. In many people's minds the best way to eradicate a species is to authorize Udall to conserve it. In his own inimitable style he will accomplish the task posthaste.

Farb's basic assumption is that somehow Indians have risen to civilized heights by being the victims of four centuries of systematic genocide. Under these assumptions the European Jews should be the most civilized people on earth from their graduate course in gas ovens given by Eichmann.

The implications of Farb's book are even more frightening. Indians, people will feel, weren't really as good as we thought, therefore we must hurry them on their way to civilization. Indians weren't really conservationists, therefore all this business about them having an attachment to their lands is bunk. Why not, therefore, go ahead with the plan for wholesale mortgage of Indian lands, they aren't using them anyway.

One has only to read Stewart Udall's review of Farb's book to understand the implication of it for future Indian policy. It is a justification for all the irrational policy decisions which Udall had wished he had been able to make but which Indian people brought to a halt. Many Indians still remember Udall's frantic ramblings at Santa Fe in 1966 when he questioned and answered himself on why

Indians had not made progress like his friends in Arizona. His answer : because they didn't have the management tools that IBM, General Motors, and Bell Telephone had.

The eventual solution, as proposed by the Department of the Interior, was the creation of a bill under which land could be mortgaged for development, with bureaucrats "giving" technical advice and sharing none of the responsibility for failure, should it occur. The Udall Omnibus Bill was basically to continue "man's rise to civilization" by systematic confiscation of existing capital owned by those-to-be-civilized, through the device of illadvised mortgages.

Farb continues to use phrases such as "test tubes" and "living laboratories" in describing the development, or rather unfolding, of Indian cultural change. In essence, then, Indian communities exist primarily for people to experiment with. Bureaucratically this means "pilot projects." Anthropologically, as we have seen, it means the continued treatment of Indian people as objects for observation.

One classic statement—"Modern American society has little place for institutionalized rites of rebellion, because it is a democratic society; it is characteristic of a democratic society always to question and challenge, never to be certain of itself" — blithely dismisses social reality.

American society has, in fact, institutionalized rebellion by making it popular. Once popularized, rebellions become fads and are so universalized that not to be rebellious is to be square, out of it, irrelevant. Television ads make a big noise about the great rebellions going on in the auto industry. Deodorants and soaps are always new, a radical departure from the old. Cigarette smokers are cautioned to break away from the crowd. Unless a man is rebelling, he is not really a man. And to achieve relevance in American society person must always be the pioneer, the innovator, against the establishment.

The import of institutionalizing rebellion is that when real rebellion occurs society climbs the walls in its fright. I keenly remember our confrontation with Department of the Interior officials at Santa Fe, when several advised us to go home or we would be "terminated." A democratic society is always up tight about real rebellions because its very operating premise is that rebellions are nice. When rebellions turn out to be not so nice, panic prevails.

Democratic society is always absolutely sure of itself. It could not be otherwise, for to be unsure would call into question the very basis of the political institutions which gave it existence. Even more horrifying would be an examination of the economic realities underlying the society.

With institutionalized rebellion a way of life, one of the major differences between white and Indians emerges—ingratitude. Whites always expect Indians to be grateful according to the whites' ideas of gratitude. Or else they expect ingratitude to be expressed in institutionalized behavior, as other members of society have been taught to do. When Indians do not respond in accustomed ways, because the way is irrelevant to Indian modes of expression, Indian response is attributed to the innate savagery of the Indian.

Sometimes Farb's anthropological references to the Plains Indians are irrelevant and ridden with historical mythologies in several respects. The Mandans, for example, are found to be extinct—which they will be happy to know about. Plains Indians in general are declared to be as make-believe as a movie set which will make them welcome Farb warmly when he next appears in the plains.

Most unforgivable is the statement that Sitting Bull was accidentally killed. For if Sitting Bull was accidentally killed, then President Kennedy's death was merely the result of Oswald carelessly cleaning his rifle. The two deaths had the same motivation—political assassination.

Man's Rise to Civilization may have redeeming anthropological features; it certainly has sufficient footnotes to make it PURE rather than APPLIED research. The question for Indian people, and the ultimate question for Americans, is What effect will it have over the lives of people?

There should be little doubt that this book tends to reinforce the anti-Indian school of thought and to sidestep the entire issue of Indian society, culture, or what have you. Unless there is a frank understanding between the two people, red and white, so that the relationship between them is honest, sincere, and equal, talk about culture will not really matter. The white man will continue to take Indian land because he will feel that he is HELPING to bring civilization to the poor savages.

Thus has it ever been with anthropologists. In believing they could find the key to man's behavior, they have, like the churches,

become forerunners of destruction. Like the missionaries, anthropologists have become intolerably certain that they represent ultimate truth.

The rest of America had better wake up before their entire lives are secretly manipulated by the musings of this breed. For the time is coming when middle class America will become credit card-carrying, turnpike-commuting, condominium-dwelling, fraternity-joining, churchgoing, sports-watching, time-purchase-buying, television-watching, magazine-subscribing, politically inert transmigrated urbanites who, through the phenomenon of the second car and the shopping center, have become golf-playing, wife-swapping, etc., etc., etc., suburbanites. Or has that day dawned? If so, you will understand what has been happening to Indian communities for a long, long time.

I would expect an instantaneous rebuttal by the “knowledgable” anthros that these sentiments do not “represent” all the Indians. They don’t TODAY. They will TOMORROW. In the meantime it would be wise for anthropologists to get down from their thrones of authority and PURE research and begin helping Indian tribes instead of preying on them. For the wheel of Karma grinds slowly but it does grind finely. And it makes a complete circle.

Excerpted from Deloria's conclusion to
Indians and Anthropologists:
Vine Deloria Jr. and the critique of anthropology

...

Anthropology came to be in a world that had accepted Darwinism as an intellectual proposition, and although there are many complaints that evolutionary theory does not possess the facts to support it, academics are extremely reluctant to abandon it. Another writer in this collection boldly asserts that I unjustly accuse anthros of being slaves to cultural evolutionary theories, but if I press any anthros in a prolonged discussion on exactly why they study Indians and other tribal peoples and why they study anthropology at all, I am almost always informed that tribal people represent an earlier stage of human accomplishment and that we can learn about our past by studying the way existing peoples live. I continue to argue that this way attitude is at the base of anthropology and will always be cited as justification for doing what anthros do—in the last analysis as the discussion ends and we go our separate ways.

According to the dictates and doctrines of cultural evolution, things should always be getting better, we should be producing a smarter model of human being, we should be able to do more wonderful things at a faster pace. We should *not*, above all, see everything collapse on us. We are smarter than tribal peoples, and we are smarter than our own ancestors, and our grandchildren will supposedly be a much better brand of organism than we are.

In that case, one should argue that anthropology must study the ancestors of the Anglo Saxons, since that group, for all practical purposes, has enjoyed virtual control of the planet for most of this century. It turned away German barbarism twice in this period of time and built an atomic and then a hydrogen bomb, certainly evidence of the superiority of this expression of civilization. Unfortunately the focus of anthros during this century has not been directed toward the dominant society but has merely encouraged its practitioners to continue the task of anthropological pioneers, recording yet again the quaint behavior of smaller societies over which Western civilization had almost complete control. So it is very difficult to now for anthropologists—or other social scientists—to offer any sane critique of modern civilization.

The conflict between Indians and anthropologists in the last two decades has been, at its core, a dead struggle over the control of definitions. Who is to determine what an Indian *really* is? The generation of anthros now retiring and passing away has not been at all willing to surrender its entrenched position on this matter. In the last few years there has been a tremendous battle over the degree to which the Six Nations might have influenced the thinking of the Constitution's fathers. Here we have seen the anthros show their true colors. No sooner was the subject raised than a bevy of anthros, lacking even a rudimentary knowledge of the historical papers, charged into the fray spouting a confusing conglomerate of anthropological concepts that made no sense at all. Advocates of the Indian position have found themselves rejected for National Endowment for the Humanities grants, been denied positions at colleges and universities, and seen well-documented books rejected by university presses that feared the wrath of prominent figures in anthropology.

This fight over the Six Nations' influence has been a bitter one, and if it had been submitted to a jury for fair deliberation the anthropological profession would now be paying reparations to the Six Nations, for the evidence and the argument weigh heavily in favor of the Iroquois and their supporters. Beneath this quarrel over the right to define social—and Indian—reality, lurks a more fundamental conflict that has not even been touched. Anthros have argued that the Iroquois could not have influenced the thought of the constitutional fathers since there is no traceable transfer of specific concepts; that is, there is no provision for women, say, to have a distinctive voice in political affairs in the U.S. Constitution. They make this argument under the assumption that non-Indian scholars know more about the Six Nations than do the Six Nations people.

The Six Nations people, however, contend that their ancestors in prolonged conversations with American political leaders promulgated certain kinds of political ideas that the Americans then adopted. It was not a case of the constitutional fathers wanting to become Indians, but an instance of them listening to the manner of resolving problems used by the Six Nations and then creating their own version of the political principles involved. The argument has been reduced to the following statements: Anthros—the constitutional fathers did not adopt Six Nation culture; Six

Nations—the constitutional fathers did discuss with our ancestors political principles of unification of states, and what they did reflects some of our way of doing things.

I will be the first to grant that the advocates for the position of the Six Nations have not used the best language and examples to present their case. And I will also grant that their response to anthropological efforts to maintain control of the definitions has not been phrased in the most polite manner. But let us clarify things even further. The Six Nations people understood that if they were recognized as the primary source of accurate information on themselves, they would break the control in academia of a small group of scholars who had devoted their whole lives to becoming experts on the Iroquois. The fight has nothing to do with the Constitution and everything to do with who represents the source of reliable authority on the Iroquois—in short, who controls the definitions.

What should the Indian advocates have said to better present their case or to make clear exactly what they were suggesting? We are the first generation of Indians who have been to college, in the sense that only since 1960 have we seen a massive entrance of Indians into colleges and universities. Social sciences on the whole have been hostile to Indians' becoming professors and expositors of the cultures they represent, and thus very few Indians are able to translate the Indian side of the discussion into concepts that will have immediate recognition among Anglo academics as an explanation worthy of consideration.

The real Indian argument, in my opinion, should be phrased as follows: The Six Nations contributed to the US Constitution at least the idea that sovereignty could be split between the national government and the constituent states in a manner in which each entity would gain in political stature and power and not lose important aspects of its political existence. Between 1783 and 1789, when the Constitution was adopted, the US governed itself by the Articles of Confederation, and under these provisions it was unclear where the national power actually rested. States could make treaties with Indian tribes, and presumably they could also regulate commerce and political relationships with other states and other countries if the need arose. Sovereignty of the states meant a weak national government and eventually the disintegration of the unity that the American Revolution had wrought.

The Six Nations had solved the question of a divided sovereignty by allocating seats on its national council to the respective five, and later six, nations, and then limiting the powers of the council. In different ways, each Indian nation was as powerful as the whole council of the league, but the pledge of peace and unity enabled the leaders of each nation to exercise national power responsibly. Because the Iroquois had a clan system, which served to provide national unity, this arrangement worked well until the Six Nations ruptured during the American Revolution because of its decision to allow individuals to take sides. The major problem in attempting to transfer some aspect of this arrangement to American political thinking was that no corresponding institution or provision to perform the function of the clan existed.

...

When we look at state-nation relations within the American constitutional framework we are looking at the Anglo adaptation of Iroquois thinking. Each time we are faced with the possibility of a third-party candidacy throwing the national presidential election into the House of Representatives, we worry about how the choice will be made and the equity of allowing a small state to have an equal vote with larger states. The strange arrangements that our Constitution provides are a direct result of consultations with the Six Nations. Where else were ideas of distributing national sovereignty articulated and practiced when the constitutional fathers were debating the organic documents of state? They certainly could not have looked to Europe for guidance, and there was no nation on earth at that time except the Six Nations that had grappled with this problem.

I have reviewed this issue because it helps me illustrate the deeper question that presently separates Indians from anthros and, by extension, from the rest of social science. Indians did, do, and will continue to express what they feel they are, and this feeling is a wholly subjective presentation. Anthros expect Indians to have the same perspective as they do—to have an objective culture that can and must be studied and that Indians themselves will study. The anthros' belief no doubt comes from the extreme materialism that has always been present in Western civilization and from their individual experiences in college and graduate school, when they had to study hard and long to master the rudiments of another

culture. But knowing what others have observed about another culture does not mean that the scholar emotionally understands that culture, and this point many anthros miss completely.

Some of the chapters in this book suggest that the anthropologist has been greeted favorably by Indians. Indeed, one contributor writes that the Indians on reservations greeted her generously because they could not afford to purchase *Custer* and so did not know they were supposed to be hostile. I can only mourn and applaud such naïveté. What she experienced was simply the hospitality of Indians toward a stranger. You can bring almost anyone into an Indian community and Indians will greet him, feed him, invite him to ceremonies, spend time with him. As an activist, I am continually dismayed when an obvious fraud or con artist is greeted effusively by Indians who seem not to exercise critical faculties at all.

What our fellow writer experienced was acceptance of her as a person, not necessarily the endorsement of her as a scholar and researcher. Certainly anthros have Indian friends. If they did not they would know it in rapid order. But Indians discount the scholarly status of the individual and simply accept the person until he or she begins to disrupt the community. People in American society have virtually no personal identity in the sense that Indians experience it. When you inquire about an Indian, the first question is almost always, where do you come from? followed by, who are your relatives? In America you are asked where you come from and what you *do*.

There is a universe of difference here. Employment or career achievement of academic or social status in American society does not have much standing in Indian society. It is family and community that count. I am constantly frustrated when I visit Indian groups and realize that for all my experience in politics and knowledge of law, what I suggest can be easily negated by anyone who has personal prestige and offers an alternative solution regardless of its sanity. Indians recognize expertise only when they accept you as a person. Some time ago a man appeared among the Sioux who said he could get the Internal Revenue Code changed so that whites within the 1851 treaty area would have to pay their taxes directly to the Sioux tribes. This proposition is preposterous and shows an appalling ignorance of basic principles of American

government. Yet the man had and still has many supporters because he also has a good deal of personal charisma.

Anthros should not misinterpret the natural hospitality of Indians as an endorsement of anthropology or support for their work. Indians may like their work and admire their skills but only because they have first accepted the individual as a person; admiration for the work depends wholly on the integrity of the work. In this respect anthros are no different from good bronc riders, capable mechanics, or friendly teachers. If the sense of personal trust is broken, everything else falls apart also. It is indeed pitiful to listen to anthros recount their friendly reception from Indians and conclude they have found some Indians who appreciate anthropology. Let the Indians detect a moral flaw in your personality and see how quickly the appreciation for your work changes.

When we have Indians in anthropology we find an even better example of how confusing the relationship between Indians and anthros is. Some prominent Indian anthros have announced at Indian meetings, "I'm an Indian, but I'm also an anthro." There is no question in this announcement that the individual has chosen the profession over the community. Once this happens, watch how quickly a cloud of suspicion envelops the Indian scholar. Such scholars may continue to travel in Indian circles, and they may think they have bridged the cultural gulf, but unless they prove to be momentarily useful they are never trusted again and people avoid them whenever possible.

Anthropology alleges to be the study of human behavior, values, and institutions. Let us suppose for the moment that Indians and tribal peoples really did have a sophisticated way of living in the world, wholly natural, and without pretensions to objective knowledge and superiority over other cultures and societies. Paul Radin once noted that these societies, although described as "primitive," were able to feed, clothe, and house all of their members and ensure that in hard times the burden of suffering fell relatively equally on everyone. We might further suppose, as do a significant number of people today, that the principles of organization and the values of these tribal or primitive societies might offer a new way of looking at the problems of industrial societies. Would not then the materials describing the behavior of tribal peoples and the tribal peoples themselves, whatever remnants now exist, be in a position

to speak meaningfully to the modern world?

Could there, for example, be something in the kinship relations—a principle whereby civility could be resorted to American society? could the festivals by which people reestablished relationships with the natural world provide us with a vehicle for making our concern about the environment an actual change of behavior instead of a vague sense of warm sentiment about chipmunks? Could the allocation of roles and functions between genders practiced by tribal peoples enable us to resolve some of the gender problems of the modern world? Could principles of balancing emotional states and the natural environment become a new way of assuming responsibilities for our cities and neighborhoods?

During the time of its formal existence, anthropology has taken the values and institutions of Western civilization, acted as if they represented normality, rationality, and sanity, and leveled severe criticism of tribal societies, finding them lacking in the rudiments of civilized behavior. The policies of political institutions and the attitudes of American society toward tribal peoples have been shaped largely by the descriptions forged by the social sciences. Instead of possessing cultures that were different but nevertheless a valid expression of how our species can live on this planet, tribal cultures have been understood as primitive efforts to become scientific and industrial, and failing efforts at that.

It is now time to reverse this perspective and use the values, behaviors, and institutions of tribal or primitive peoples to critique and investigate the industrial societies and their obvious shortcomings. As long as anthropology and anthropologists focus on Indians and other tribal peoples and report back to their own society about the quaint and sometimes romantic people they are studying, there is no respect for tribal peoples in spite of the pious disclaimers and pledges of emotional allegiance given by scholars. If however, anthropologists and other social scientists begin to speak critically of the shortcomings of their own society using the knowledge that they claim to have derived from observation of the tribal peoples, that will be a signal that something of real value is contained within the tribal context.

The so-called New Agers are attempting to perform this task albeit in an overly romantic and inept fashion. They have

demonstrated, however, a great willingness to listen to other ways of doing things. The fight over credentials, over who should or can speak with authority about Indians, should cease. Instead of the confrontation over whether or not the Six Nations had influence on constitutional thinking, the debate should shift to the question of whether or not an institution or a formal practice comparable to the clan system exists in industrial society, whether it is useful to that society, and what can be done to enable it to resolve problems that now plague modern peoples. As another example, agricultural surpluses today are the product of subsidizing the commodity markets; we should be considering how we can transform these surpluses to enable us to feed people.

I realize that asking anthropology to undertake a new task, particularly a task with such a high potential for disturbing the secure financial base from which scholars have always comfortably moved to examine the exotic tribal peoples of the world, is a rather hazardous request and one likely to be rejected out of hand. But it is a necessary request because it basically asks scholars to develop a personal identity as concerned human beings and move away from the comfortable image and identity of "scholar." If anthros did begin to offer intellectual and moral leadership in American society and became problem solvers, they would achieve the necessary objectivity they do not have at the present time.

It seems to me that after two decades of reasonably constructive reforms in the relationship between anthropologists and Indians, and with the passing of the elder generation of anthros who were victims of what Alfred North Whitehead described as "misplaced concreteness," we have an opportunity to know the colonial mentality behind us and bring the accumulated knowledge and insights of anthropology to bear on the larger arena of human activities. And we have the responsibility to do so.

Vine Deloria Jr. has much to say, to anyone who can listen, on the complicated realities of life as an object.

From this article, liberals will be content to discover that decades later, anthropologists responded so dramatically to Deloria's critiques and insights.

But radicals will pay attention to the ways that criticism is subverted by the status quo, and how bridge-builders (in this case anthropologists, in other cases missionaries, academics, non-profits, etc.) work to domesticate those who are cultural, social, political, racial, etc. outsiders.

Herein lies chapter 4 from *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969), "Anthropologists and Other Friends," a brilliant, scathing, and *funny* article on the relationship between those who study, and the studied.

Also included is Deloria's conclusion to *Anthropologists and Indians* (1998), a book on anthropologists responding twenty years later to his provocation (for all of those who think that things have gotten so much better)...