

Book Review by: Walter L. Williams. *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Aug., 1977), pp. 482-484. Published by: Southern Historical Association.

*Indian-White Relations: A Persistent Paradox*. Edited by Jane F. Smith and Robert M. Kvasnicka. (Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1976.)

These collected papers, presented at the 1972 National Archives Conference on Research in the History of Indian-White Relations, contain valuable analyses of the post-frontier era. Overall, however, this volume is marred by disorganization and faulty conception. The editors provide no conclusion nor explanation of exactly what is the "persistent paradox" of Indian-white relations.

One purpose of this conference was to inform scholars about available archival sources. Two papers deal with Indian-related records in the National Archives. Another section includes papers describing significant collections at the University of Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Gilcrease Institute, and the Duke Projects in Indian Oral History (collected regionally at various universities). Although this information is valuable, it would have been more useful to have had the collections listed and annotated in an appendix rather than reprinted verbatim from the presentations. An exception is anthropologist John Ewers's interesting discussion of trade artifacts and photographs as documentary sources for Indian-white relations.

Unfortunately, several of the authors ignore Ewers's bicultural approach and present Indian-white relations as a one-sided "white attitudes toward Indians." What is missing is any discussion of Native American attitudes toward whites. Francis Paul Prucha sets a somber tone for the volume by praying that historians "be slow to judge and slow to condemn" (p. 8) white expansion over Indians. Such a view is similar to the defense of U. B. Phillips's interpretation of black slavery after revisionists attacked it on moral grounds. To accept such racial attitudes without judgment is to abandon historical analysis.

Some of the papers are quick to defend United States Indian policy. For example, Herman Viola emphasizes policymakers' "genuine concern for the welfare and improvement of the Indians" (p. 45). Fine, but such an approach ignores the actual tragic results of that "concern" and the fact that native peoples may not have wanted to be "improved" in the white man's image. By accepting their white-written sources at face value and quoting those opinions as fact some authors presented a distorted view.

Robert Utley's paper reminds us that the frontier army should not be condemned any more than any other colonial force, but it is dangerous to let that serve as apology. In his conclusion that soldiers shot "noncombatants [Indians] incidentally and accidentally, not purposefully" (p. 141)--which I am sure the relatives of the dead were glad to know--Utley ignores the overriding reason for hostilities. Nowhere does he emphasize that Indians were defending their lands against invasion.

Once we get beyond the frontier, the papers improve. Henry Fritz concludes that nineteenth-century humanitarians had as much to do with Indian land dispossession as expansionists. In a perceptive comment Robert Berkhofer points out that by viewing Indian culture as a threat whites negated the most effective means of assimilation. William Hagan's paper details how Indian reservations were impoverished by inadequate financial support from Congress. Two other well-written papers, by Kenneth Philp and Lawrence Kelly, assess both the radicalism and limits of John Collier's Indian New Deal. Again, a conservative Congress ended reform.

Together with the comments on Indian factionalism by Roy Meyer, Mary Young, David Baird, and D'Arcy McNickle this post-frontier section forms the best part of the volume. It is a pity that, except for Louis Bruce's description of current Bureau of Indian Affairs policy, there is no historical analysis of the crucial post-1945 era. Such an oversight implies that Indian problems are confined to the past.

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