

*  <b>The Bootblack Stand</b>  *		*  by <b>George Washington Plunkitt</b>  *
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*Dr. George Washington Plunkitt, our prize-winning political analyst, is celebrating the publication of his new book, which is now available at avant-garde bookstores throughout New Jersey. Dr. Plunkitt's book is about the importance of altruism in politics and it is titled What's in It for Me? Although Dr. Plunkitt expects to earn ten million dollars from sales of his new book, he has agreed to continue to advise public figures through this column. Address all correspondence to The Bootblack Stand, c/o The Establishment, R.R. 11, Box 360, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, Continental U.S.A.*

Dear Dr. Plunkitt:

I am faced with an indelicate situation. While listening to the daily six-hour wrap-up of the news on National Public Radio I found the solution to the energy crisis when one of the learned commentators interviewed a German emigrant now residing in Teaneck, New Jersey. Dr. Adolph Doltheimer, a hitherto obscure scientist and part-time dishwasher, received his early training at the Munich Institute of Popular Mechanics. Sadly, his first scholarly publication, "The Static Dynamism of the Bovine Feces," received such furious ridicule in the professional journals that he was literally driven from his post as research gardener at the University of Bavaria and . . . well, he was incarcerated in a local asylum for certain early morning experiments he insisted on engaging in. During his incarceration he became politically active in the new politics of the time, and his career was vindicated in the middle thirties

when he was raised to a high research position in the German government. After the war he turned up in Teaneck and continued his researches, the pursuit of which earned him the somewhat curious reputation he now holds in that town.

At any rate on National Public Radio he recently disclosed his breathtaking discovery that there are calculable amounts of useful energy in decaying human feces. What is more he has developed techniques to utilize this energy, and—according to his extrapolations—if scientists lay a field of human feces across an area the size of Oklahoma enough energy can be extracted to supply all the needs of New York for the next twenty-four months. My problem is how do we break the news to Oklahomans? And do you think Dr. Doltheimer's unfortunate political background will influence the success of our program?

William E. Simon  
Federal Energy Office

Dear Mr. Simon:

After looking over some of your other proposals, rationing, mandatory speed limits of 55 miles per hour, federally policed living rooms, and so forth, I am surprised that you would view Dr. Doltheimer's political past as controversial. As to your other problem, I suggest you leave the people of Oklahoma alone, and instead conduct your program in and around New York City. I am sure you could spread your revolutionary new energy source all over the city and the average New Yorker would not even notice its presence. In fact the last time I was there, it appeared someone had beaten you to it.

—GWP

Dear Dr. Plunkitt:

My name is Sky and I live on nothing but seeds, seeds and small things. I am the child of Neptune and Joan Baez, and I love the surf, the earth, and budding things. In fact I love Bud. He is my roommate, and we take showers together. But we never use soap. It has hexachlorophene and it will turn your mind into a mass of saponaceous goo and the fishes will not be able to swim in it. We use sand.

Peace and freedom,  
Sky

Dear Mr. Sky:

I am always getting letters like this from ex-Capitol Hill staffers. Generally they are from Senator Kennedy's staff, and I am getting pretty tired of them. If you people are so dratted happy why do you always have to tell people like me about it? If personal happiness is your personal problem why not keep it personal? And stop sending me plastic flowers.

—GWP

## Book Review

# Seeds of Extinction

**F**EW SUBJECTS HAVE received so much attention from historians as that of the gradual but seemingly inevitable retreat of the "savage" before the march of American "civilization." Unfortunately most of this interest has tended to focus on the battlefield narrative. And while such narratives have contributed to a popular awareness of such outrages as the massacres at Sand Creek and Wounded Knee, they have contributed little to an increased understanding of the historic complexities involved in Indian-white relations. There have been exceptions to this of course. Roy Harvey Pearce's study of the Indian as idea and symbol, Robert F. Berkhofer's study of Protestant missionary efforts, and Francis Paul Prucha's survey of federal Indian policy (all three covering the same period as the book under review, late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) have been especially valuable. But these have been the

**Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian**

by **Bernard W. Sheehan**  
University of North Carolina \$11.95

exception rather than the rule. For the most part the reader is served up cliché-ridden, shabbily researched accounts of the slow and torturous destruction of the native American, sometimes portrayed as noble, sometimes as ignoble, but rarely as he really was.

Professor Sheehan's work is concerned not so much with the nature of the Indian as with the white perceptions of his nature and how these perceptions were to be translated into an Indian policy. Where previous studies have attempted to probe the subtleties of white perceptions of the Indian, and where others have treated the evolution of an Indian policy, until now no one has attempted to explain in any depth

the relationship between the two. Thus, in the words of the author, the uniqueness of this study "lies in its juxtaposition of thought and event and in its effort to describe the manner in which the two depend on and are influenced by each other. It is, consequently, an attempt to infuse into the study of Indian-white relations, and into the history of disparate cultures, a deeper perception of the importance of thought and attitude in the making of historical event." The result of Sheehan's labors is a first-class piece of historical scholarship. If his purpose is somewhat awesome, so is his accomplishment.

While it is impossible to do justice to the line of argument in this important work in a review of this size, it is possible to sketch the broad outlines of Sheehan's interpretation. It is the author's contention that while Americans may have differed significantly on many issues, a consensus of opinion

pervaded all discussion of the Indian question, a consensus that the author claims was both Jeffersonian and philanthropic. It was Jeffersonian in that Jefferson's life spanned for the most part the period under consideration and his writings helped shape the consensus that was ultimately to determine Indian policy. It was philanthropic in that its thrust was benevolence, albeit a self-serving one. While Indian hating was a powerful force in the young nation, particularly on the frontier, Sheehan demonstrates convincingly that the overwhelming desire of whites was not to exterminate the Indian but to transform him—not to destroy his physical being (although this frequently happened), but to destroy his Indianness. By philanthropists conceptualizing the conflict between Indian and white in terms of savagism versus civilization, with the latter being naturally superior to the former, the seeds of extinction for the Indian were sown.

Sheehan organizes his study around three aspects of the philanthropic design, its "metaphysics," its "program," and finally, its "illusions." Because the author is concerned with explaining the relationship between image and event, idea and policy, he devotes considerable attention to the "metaphysics" of the Indian question.

Two conceptions, that of the noble savage and environmentalism were central to the Jeffersonian framework. While the former prompted the desire to transform the Indian, the latter guaranteed it as a historical inevitability and explained the manner in which it would be accomplished. According to the environmentalist conception, the Indian's present condition (savagery) could be explained in terms of the circumstances of his environment rather than by any inherent inadequacies in his race. Moreover, just as circumstance had produced the savage Indian, so the manipulation of environment might produce the civilized Indian. When one adds to this the enlightenment view of history as civilized progress, the rationale for the total remaking of the Indian was complete.

The philanthropic outlook called for the transformation of the Indian, but as Sheehan points out the "program" through which this transformation was to be accomplished was actually quite feeble, at least when one considers the nature of the task. (When one is pushing history along its natural course of development, the question of program becomes a mute one.) In any case, missionaries and others were

only too glad to participate in the grand scheme, and while some might debate whether civilization should precede Christianization, or vice versa, about the ultimate objective there was no dispute. As one philanthropist was to express it: "their whole character, inside and out; language, and morals, must be changed." This called for a heavy dose of education and Christianity, and as Sheehan points out the school and the church were to play a key role in the philanthropic program. And then there was the question of private property. It was inconceivable to the Jeffersonian mind that the Indian could be civilized without owning and farming his own plot of land. Thus, where possible, tribal lands were divided up among individual families for the purpose of breaking down tribal loyalties and for instilling in the Indian a sense of industry. There would, of course, always be some land left over. And this fact enabled the philanthropist to profess benevolence toward the Indian and still participate in the popular pastime of relieving him of his real estate. This was just the sort of benevolence that both the frontiersman and the land speculator could identify with!

A program based on such a simplistic view of cultural change was destined to fail, and so it did. In a final section on "illusions" the author documents the attempt of philanthropists to comprehend the consequences of their efforts. Rather than achieving the transformation hoped for, more often they observed the reality of the Indian's "personal and tribal disintegration." The destruction of savagism was part of the plan, but it had always been assumed that civilization could be neatly slipped into the breach. Not only was the Indian failing to assimilate, he was dying. Unwilling to accept the harsh realities as to the limitations of their design, philanthropists sought explanations. Among those offered were the Indian's propensity for violence, his susceptibility to disease and alcoholism, and finally, his exposure to the vices of a frontier society that not only was scarcely above the Indian on the scale of civilization, but was bent on his destruction as well. It was in this context that philanthropists lent their support to the popular clamor for Indian removal. Once the Indian was removed from the vices of frontier society, it was argued, the civilization process might be renewed under more favorable circumstances. Given the failure of the civilization program, removal served as a convenient solution to an embarrassing situation; it allowed the philanthropist

to postpone the day when he would have to confront the validity of his original premises.

Because the scope and purpose of Sheehan's study are so immense and because the issues involved are still with us today, this work will certainly provoke considerable discussion within the historical community. Some, for instance, may question whether the author's emphasis on the consensus of the age is somewhat overstated, or whether the philanthropist had the influence over Indian policy that is implied in this study. But while various aspects of the author's interpretation will no doubt be questioned, this study will stand as a major work in the field for some time to come. For this reason it deserves careful attention by serious students of American history and is required reading for any understanding of one of the more tragic chapters in the nation's history. The full extent of that tragedy is brought home clearly in this study, not because the author has engaged in writing history as moral indictment (he has intentionally avoided such a posture), but because he has thoroughly demonstrated that even the "friends" of the Indian were not really his friends at all. As the author expresses it, "If the frontier adopted the direct method of murdering Indians, humanitarians were only more circumspect in demanding cultural suicide of the tribes." Thus, the ultimate tragedy, "the white man's sympathy was more deadly than his animosity."

But as Sheehan points out, the Indian survived. And he might have added that Indianness, although to a lesser extent, has survived as well. The recent events at Wounded Knee, the revival of traditional ceremonies such as the Sun Dance on several of the reservations, and the self-determination movement in Indian education, all suggest that the issues which confronted the Jeffersonian mind are still very much with us today. And how are these issues to be resolved? Will we at last move beyond what educational historian James Anderson has called the "sub-culture ideology," the idea "that if you are a numerical minority then you are minority in culture." If such is the case, then the Indian will have found a true friend at last, one who not only respects the right of his physical being to exist (something the Jeffersonian philanthropist granted), but one who respects as well his essential humanity and the legitimacy of his traditions.

David Adams

## EDITORIAL

(continued from page 4)

Such preposterous fads along with his political, cultural, and religious enthusiasms are almost all dictated by a few hucksters from Manhattan and Cambridge. The intellectualoid is full of fears.

In the final analysis the fundamental elements in every intellectualoid are a) that though he makes a great to-do over "ideas," he does not read seriously, and b) that his mind is incapable of disciplined thought. Indeed he seems always to suffer

from what the shrinks call partial personality disorder. He is a neurotic.

The intellectualoid will spend the rest of his life snorting and fuming in the American audience, that immense ocean of sedentary souls who nervously and reproachfully follow the doings of the nation from their armchairs. Occasionally the intellectualoid will rouse himself to participate in a demonstration or to write a semiliterate letter to his local editor, but then he slumps back into his throne and continues to improve his mind, a faculty he cherishes

much as a Hollywood star cherishes her pectoralis major.

The intellectualoid is a phenomenon of our mass society, an amusing mutant, hovering somewhere between the library of the intellectual and the sink of the uneducated clod. He has made a resounding botch of politics, the arts—in fact everything he touches becomes a world of Dogberries. From the depths of my well-stocked bomb shelter I salute him and look forward to his increasing influence upon our ever evolving Republic.

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.