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Dr. Thomas A. Bland, Critic of Forced Assimilation

THOMAS W. COWGER

On Valentine's Day, 14 February 1882, former-Indian-superintendent-turned-reformer Colonel Alfred B. Meacham related a recent premonition of death to his friend Dr. Thomas A. Bland. Believing his earthly mission nearly fulfilled, Meacham implored Bland to continue publication of his monthly periodical devoted to Indian reform, *The Council Fire*. Two days later, Meacham died at his editorial table, and Bland became editor of the journal.¹ Bland used *The Council Fire* and the National Indian Defence Association, which he founded in 1885, as vehicles for his particular philosophy of Indian reform.

Bland largely accepted the goal of Indian assimilation as outlined by humanitarian reformers of his generation. However, in his view, proponents of coercive allotment of reservation land had mistaken the end for the means. He insisted that successful assimilation demanded a gradual and voluntary conversion and not compulsion.² Convinced that sudden change was detrimental, Bland began a crusade to protect tribal institutions and property rights. As a critic of forced assimilation, he clashed with reformers in the Women's National Indian Association, the Indian Rights Association, the Board of Indian Commissioners, and the Lake Mohonk Conference of "Friends of the Indians," who campaigned vigorously to make severalty compulsory. Indeed, Bland's outlook and struggle against rapid assimilation provides significant

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insight into a critical era of reform. Clearly, Bland was not a sentimental romantic who simply exalted the qualities of the "noble savage"; nor does the evidence suggest that he represented early notions of cultural pluralism or relativism. Yet his position as champion of Indian self-determination during this period was certainly unusual. He represented not only the most persistent but perhaps the only voice crying for retention of Indian rights against an onslaught of allotment advocates. This paper seeks to explicate Bland's considerable efforts to block measures that forced rapid assimilation on the tribes.

Bland's interest in Indian reform stemmed from several background influences.³ His parents were members of a North Carolina Quaker colony that had migrated to Orange County, Indiana, in 1817, and this may have stimulated Bland's general philanthropic concerns.⁴ Early nineteenth-century American Quakers typically combined altruism, benevolence, and a sense of social responsibility in promoting social reforms. Certainly, Bland was a reformer by nature and instinct. After graduating from Eclectic Medical Institute of Cincinnati, Ohio, and prior to his active work in the Indians' cause, he vigorously promoted health reforms and monetary changes via the Greenback party.⁵ Throughout Bland's life, his wife Cora assisted him closely in his reform activities.

Bland's friendship with Alfred Meacham doubtlessly led to his specific interest in Indian reform.⁶ While chairing a peace commission during the Modoc War of 1872-73, Meacham was fired upon. Two fellow commissioners died, and Meacham was severely wounded and partially scalped by hostile Indians. Instead of being resentful about the episode, Meacham devoted the rest of his life to Indian reform. It was in this cause that he enlisted the support of Bland. Perhaps most importantly, Bland obtained most of his views on Indian policy from Meacham.

Bland first met Meacham through a mutual friend in Boston in June 1875, and "within an hour . . . [they] were fast friends."⁷ In the following months, Bland provided Meacham not only with medical care but also with assistance in managing his lecture circuit.⁸ On returning to the East after a lecture tour in 1877, Meacham, with Bland's encouragement, decided to begin publication of *The Council Fire*.⁹

In the first issue, published in January 1878, *The Council Fire* described itself as "a monthly journal devoted to the civilization and rights of the American Indian."¹⁰ Before 1882, subscribers never totaled more than a thousand. Yet almost an equal number

of copies were distributed free to missionaries, senators, congressmen, Indian agents, and other government officials. Often Bland's widespread distribution of complimentary copies created financial difficulties for the journal.¹¹

When Bland assumed editorship of the journal, he became an unwitting participant in a debate that would influence Indian policy for the next half-century. During the 1880s, westerners hoped to open the door of the last remaining tribal estates that were still closed to settlement; critics of a corrupt and ineffective reservation system demanded a new course in Indian policy; and Christian reformers sought to use their growing strength to resolve the "Indian question" once and for all.

These Christian reformers, convinced of their divine mission to spread American culture and to develop the West as a means of advancing Christianity, deeply believed that communal landholding hindered the Indians' progress toward "civilization." Consequently, they demanded the individualization of the Indians' holdings. Seeing no value in Indian culture, the reformers set out to destroy Indian traditions and tribal relations and to replace both with white institutions. Severalty, or individual allotment of land, was intended to force tribes into an Anglo-American system of tenure and inheritance which, the reformers believed, would quickly assimilate the Indians.¹²

In 1882, the year when Bland became editor of *The Council Fire*, the Indian Rights Association (IRA) was formed. The new organization soon became one of the most dominant forces outside of government in shaping Indian policy. Bland initially welcomed the IRA and other reform groups by offering the "columns of *The Council Fire*, through which to communicate with each other and the general public."¹³ However, as differences of opinion developed, the IRA became Bland's chief nemesis.

Early incidents involving Bland and the IRA set the stage for a controversy that would rage over the next several years. At one point, as Bland was struggling to keep *The Council Fire* solvent, the IRA considered buying the journal and installing their Washington lobbyist, Charles C. Painter, as editor. The organization believed that the journal, under their direction and with an enlarged circulation, could pay its own expenses. In April 1883, the IRA executive committee endorsed the procurement of the paper. The transaction collapsed when the association learned that it would have to assume liabilities of between two and three thousand dollars incurred since the journal's inception.¹⁴

Following the unsuccessful negotiations for the purchase of the journal, a bitter confrontation ensued between Bland and the IRA. As a result of a showdown at Pine Ridge between Chief Red Cloud of the Oglala and their agent, Dr. Valentine T. McGillicuddy, relations between the parties rapidly deteriorated. A strong-willed army surgeon, McGillicuddy used every available means, including ration reduction, to terminate the power of nonprogressive chiefs. The agent particularly targeted Red Cloud, who, he felt, represented the old tribalism. In the battle between McGillicuddy and Red Cloud, Bland and the IRA chose sides. Subsequent events at the Sioux Reservation destroyed any hopes that the reformers could work in unison.

Herbert Welsh, founder of the IRA, visited Pine Ridge in the summer of 1883. While at the agency, Welsh stayed at the home of McGillicuddy and praised the "perfect order and cleanliness" at the agency. He also commended McGillicuddy for a reduction of the ration system, which he felt was "simply a premium offered to idleness and pauperism."¹⁵ Mainline reformers such as Welsh and his associates, anxious to hasten the civilization process, encouraged the progressives and deprecated the nonprogressives.¹⁶ These reformers believed that if the agent, the key figure in the process, could control the conservative chiefs and aggressively promote assimilation, he deserved their unwavering support. In the eyes of the IRA, McGillicuddy was a model agent.

Bland believed otherwise, and he described McGillicuddy as a "petty, vindictive, revengeful tyrant, who has been robbing the Indians, and persecuting them in the most infamous manner for attempting to expose his schemes for enriching himself at their expense."¹⁷ Bland later defended the most noted Oglala tribal leader, arguing that Red Cloud was "persecuted so vilely for no offense but that of demanding justice and fair treatment for his people."¹⁸ Bland, a strong advocate of reform at the agency level, charged McGillicuddy with deception and closely monitored affairs at Pine Ridge. He frequently filled *The Council Fire* with attacks on the Sioux agent.¹⁹

In Bland, Red Cloud found a devout friend and partisan. Bland entertained the Sioux leader in his home during the chief's several official visits to Washington. Often the purpose of such visits was to try to persuade then secretary of the interior Henry M. Teller to appoint a new agent for the Oglala people.²⁰ Red Cloud also asked that Bland serve as attorney for the Oglala, but Teller rejected the request.²¹

The clash between Bland and the IRA accelerated when Red Cloud accused McGillicuddy of appropriating government supplies for personal use and favoring select Indians in the distribution of annuities. Red Cloud's struggle with McGillicuddy provided Bland a convenient example of interference in tribal authority.

In June 1884, as Red Cloud's campaign against McGillicuddy quickened, Bland, at the invitation of Red Cloud and with the reluctant permission of Secretary Teller, visited Pine Ridge. McGillicuddy met Bland at his office door, ignored his letter from Secretary Teller, and ordered him off the reservation. Bland's visit to Pine Ridge lasted less than two hours. In mid-July, Bland returned to Washington and, through the general press and the pages of *The Council Fire*, made use of the incident at Pine Ridge to escalate his crusade against McGillicuddy.²²

Welsh and Republican senator Henry L. Dawes from Massachusetts rallied to McGillicuddy's defense and openly challenged Bland. Dawes's interest in Indian reform helped generate greater public concern. Although some earlier laws and treaties already had severalty provisions, Dawes's bill in 1870 to discontinue the treaty-making system became the first step toward a general allotment policy for all Indians. Known for his parliamentary skills, Dawes served as a crucial legislative instrument, working closely with the Boston Indian Committee, the IRA, the Women's National Indian Association and the Lake Mohonk Conference of the "Friends of the Indians."

On 5 August 1884, when the *Springfield Republican* published an editorial based on Bland's material entitled "Red Cloud's Sioux and their Agent," Senator Dawes responded at once. In an open letter that appeared in the *Republican* on 7 August, the Massachusetts senator described Bland as "a very strange man." Dawes characterized Bland to be "as wild in his attempt to state facts as he is in his ideas of what is proper policy toward the race he thinks he serves."²³

Welsh further estranged Bland by distributing nearly three thousand copies of the Dawes letter.²⁴ Another IRA official, Philip Garrett, brought the incident to the attention of the secretary of the interior, L. Q. C. Lamar. Garrett persuaded Lamar that he believed Bland sincere but "of very weak judgment, carried away by prejudices and impulses, as to be of no practical value."²⁵

Bland responded to his critics with an editorial in *The Council Fire* entitled "The Indian Rights Association—Is the Name a

Misnomer?" He petitioned the "good" IRA members, who had not known that their association "would be used to defend a thieving Indian agent." Bland maintained that the "Indian Rights (?) Association" should "have given the Indians' side of the story instead of the agents's."²⁶ Completing his accusations, Bland attacked Dawes's reputation as a "champion of the Indians." "He has been the special champion of every corrupt agent," he continued, "and other officials of the Indian service which *The Council Fire* has exposed."²⁷

The Bland-Red Cloud campaign against McGillicuddy was not finished. Hopes for McGillicuddy's dismissal were raised when Grover Cleveland, the reform governor from New York, was elected president in 1884. The possibility existed that Cleveland, plagued by patronage-hungry Democrats out of federal office since 1861, might replace the Republican-appointed McGillicuddy. Secretary Teller nevertheless reappointed McGillicuddy to another term during the final days of the outgoing Arthur administration.

Pressures to dismiss McGillicuddy placed the Cleveland administration in a quandary. Cleveland disliked the spoils system, and it might reflect poorly on him if he removed McGillicuddy strictly for political reasons. Moreover, the IRA and Senator Dawes, now chairman of the Republican-controlled Senate Indian Affairs Committee, had been acrimonious in their denunciations of Bland in support of McGillicuddy. Cleveland and Secretary of the Interior Lamar decided to move cautiously in reaching a decision.

Cleveland and Lamar resorted to enticing McGillicuddy into insubordination. In May 1886, following several investigations, the Department of the Interior sent inspector E. D. Bannister to Pine Ridge with orders to replace McGillicuddy's clerk. When McGillicuddy refused to accept the private clerk appointed by the department, Bannister, acting under instructions from Lamar and approved by the president, informed the agent that he was relieved by a cavalry officer.²⁸ The long conflict was finally ended. Although personally pleasing, McGillicuddy's removal represented a small victory for Bland and his philosophy of support for tribalism. Indeed, the episode was merely the first stage of a much more significant fight that would rage between Bland and the IRA over the next several years.

The much more important and deeper schism that arose between Bland and other Indian reform leaders occurred over the timing of dividing Indian lands. The humanitarian reformers,

adamant in their belief that individual land ownership would "civilize" the Indians, began a concerted drive for a general allotment law. Unwilling to admit that many previous severalty experiments had proved unsuccessful, the reformers demonstrated tremendous confidence in their assimilationist tenets and pushed steadily for new legislation.²⁹

The Senate debate on the Coke bill in 1880 marked the first noteworthy discussion of severalty as a universal Indian policy by either legislative branch.³⁰ Severalty clearly enjoyed most reformers' support. The Lake Mohonk Conference in 1884 passed a resolution endorsing the Coke bill as the best measure "for the disintegration of the tribal organization and the ultimate breaking up of the reservation."³¹

Bland promised to support the severalty legislation but only with the Indians' consent. Thus, *The Council Fire* praised an 1884 version of the Coke bill that contained a House amendment requiring Indian approval. Bland commented that "its provisions seem so well guarded as to appear quite fair to the Indians."³² However, mainstream reformers like Lyman Abbott wanted to make severalty prescriptive, not optional, and they opposed the Coke bill in this form.³³

As debate over the measure continued in Congress, Bland took a stronger stand against coercion. His quarrels with the IRA prompted him to start the National Indian Defence Association (NIDA) in 1885 as a means to champion Indian self-determination.³⁴ In November 1885, Bland published a platform for his new group. The statement argued that the immediate dissolution of tribal relations would impede, not foster, the civilization of the Indians. Further, individual allotments would induce the Indians to sell their land. And, while education might provide a remedy for the next generation, it could not solve the problems of the present one.³⁵

When he spoke at the January 1886 meeting of the Board of Indian Commissioners, Bland proposed an alternative course in Indian policy. He suggested "that patents to their lands be issued by the Government to the Indian tribes, to be held in common until by education . . . they should be prepared to safely have the land divided and patented to them in severalty."³⁶ Fearing that assimilation could not be achieved by presenting the Indians with responsibilities they were unprepared to assume, Bland argued for a tribal patent in fee. In contrast to immediate private ownership of land, Bland preferred to see the tribes, as a collective

community, given absolute title to their reservation lands.

Bland's suggestions offered a strikingly different, even radical, alternative to other reformers' ideas. Except where a treaty or law gave a tribe fee title to its land, Indians held their reservations with only a right of occupancy, and the fee and the disposition of such lands rested solely with the government.³⁷ If the tribes were to enjoy the full right and jurisdiction over reservation lands as Bland advocated, then tribal members, and not reformers, could determine when a tribe was prepared to allot the land to individuals. Bland maintained that gradual education of the Indians could also precede and not follow the dissolution of tribal lands as advocated by other reformers.³⁸

Bland's liberal proposal apparently stemmed from the precedent of tribal titles given to the Five Civilized Tribes in their removal treaties of the 1830s. Believing these treaties could serve as a model for future Indian policy, Bland argued that "these five tribes still own and occupy the lands secured to them by patent, and they have solved the problem of civilization for themselves and in their own way." Whereas, he continued, "the experiment of giving lands in severalty has been tried in several cases, . . . and it has invariably proved a failure."³⁹ Undoubtedly, Bland's unusual position stemmed from his close association with the Five Civilized Tribes. The NIDA received widespread support, both moral and financial, from the Indians in Indian Territory.⁴⁰

Indeed Bland's NIDA also believed in the inalienable "democratic" right of tribes to hold title to their property. "White infants have this capacity from the moment of birth," executive committee member A. J. Willard insisted, "long before their power of alienation is recognized, and the necessity of guardianship in their behalf does not interfere with this right."⁴¹ Willard went one step further in skillfully questioning the logic behind allotment legislation. He asked, If individual Indians were perceived by advocates as prepared to hold property, then why could not tribes manage such responsibilities?⁴²

Meanwhile, the humanitarian reformers seized upon any issue to advance their philosophy of civilization. In 1884, the passage of the bill known as "Senator Dawes's Sioux bill" became one of their principal objectives. Senator Dawes, in conjunction with other "Friends of the Indians," hoped to reduce the size of the Great Sioux Reservation, allot the land to individual tribal members, and open the surplus land to white settlement.

Herbert Welsh, founder of the IRA, prepared a leaflet in Febru-

ary 1886 supporting Dawes's bill and the immediate opening of the Sioux lands.⁴³ Displaying his impatience, Welsh asserted that "we cannot stop the legitimate advance of emigration and civilization . . . and, we add most emphatically, we would not if we could."⁴⁴ The Board of Indian Commissioners and the Lake Mohonk Conference also pressed for passage without delay.⁴⁵

Like previous reform legislation, Dawes's Sioux bill had little trouble clearing the Senate, but the House presented a hurdle.⁴⁶ The humanitarian reformers became upset when the lower chamber failed to take up the measure in 1886.⁴⁷ The next step for the "Friends of the Indians" was to secure a place for the Sioux bill on the House calendar so as to force a vote.

Bland was angered by mainstream reformers' lobbying efforts, which he regarded as a betrayal of the Indians' cause. Appearing before a House subcommittee on 23 February 1886, Bland opposed Welsh and lobbyists from Dakota Territory. After both sides testified, the chairman of the subcommittee asked if the IRA and the NIDA were not one in the same. Bland emphatically replied, "No Sir: decidedly not. It is a very different sort of situation."⁴⁸

When Welsh appeared before the House Indian Committee on 9 March 1886, Reverend Bryon Sunderland, vice president of the NIDA, pleaded for a reconsideration of assimilation by force: "When might is harnessed to the Car of Progress," he argued, "it turns often to a cruel oppression of the weak." "Give the Indians more time," he continued, "say to the car of Juggernaut—misnamed 'progress'—Halt a bit! We cannot go so fast."⁴⁹

Bland also continued his plea for gaining the Indians' consent to changes in their condition, which changes should only be gradual. He increased his campaign against the Sioux bill in the pages of his journal and singled out Welsh for unflattering remarks.⁵⁰ Apparently, the opposition had limited success. Bishop William H. Hare, the Episcopal missionary among the Sioux, claimed that much of the tribe's resistance to land cession was due to copies of *The Council Fire* circulating on the Sioux Reservation.⁵¹

While the IRA and other humanitarian reformers continued their struggle over the Sioux bill, more significant legislation was forthcoming from Senator Dawes. The Massachusetts senator was busy drafting a general allotment in severalty bill that might make special legislation for particular reservations unnecessary. Dawes's legislative influence served as the key to the success of the assimilation campaign. A dozen senators during this period, generally from the East and all Republicans, can be identified as "Dawes loyalists."⁵²

When the Coke bill came before the Senate again on 8 December 1885, it was reintroduced by Dawes, now chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee.⁵³ It was only a matter of time before some sort of general severalty bill would be enacted into law with Dawes's name attached as sponsor.

No remedy for the Indian problem was more continually proposed than allotment of land to the Indians in severalty. Historians have traced the idea to the early colonial period.⁵⁴ Support for this concept came slowly but steadily. The persistence of the humanitarian reformers in the decades following the Civil War provided a new impetus to the severalty principle. By the mid-1880s, the concept was almost universally accepted as the panacea to the Indian problem. Private landowning was so aggressively promoted that Congress neared passage of a general allotment law.

The allotment bill proposed by Dawes passed the Senate on 25 February 1886 but, as usual, was detained in the House. Although the general severalty legislation and the Dawes Sioux bill were delayed in coming to a vote, Bland continued to denounce the IRA. This prompted Welsh to publish a pamphlet entitled "Irreconcilable Differences of Opinion." In it he wrote,

Dr. Bland's efforts have been directed toward keeping the Indian as he is, his tribal relations untouched, his reservation intact; and in opposing the sale of unused lands upon no matter how equitable conditions for white settlement Senator Dawes and the Indian Rights Association, on the other hand, believe that such a thing is prejudice in the best interest of the Indians.⁵⁵

While the disagreement between Bland and the IRA continued, the general severalty bill at last came before the House early in the second session of the forty-ninth Congress. As Bland prepared to defeat the bill, or at least amend it so as to nullify the main provisions, the Boston Indian Citizenship Committee offered its support to influence key members of the legislative committee.⁵⁶ The bill was debated on 15 December 1886 and passed the next day. However, the House added three important amendments to the Senate bill: (1) a decrease in the time allowed for selection of allotments from five years to two years; (2) a provision allowing Congress to manage the disposal of the money from the sale of surplus lands; and (3) more importantly, a stipulation that the measure be implemented only with tribal consent. Bland, pleased with the provisions allowing for Indian approval, agreed to support the Dawes bill in this form.⁵⁷

When the Senate refused to accept the modifications and the House remained unwavering, a conference committee was appointed to reconcile the differences. Dawes gained the upper hand during conference proceedings and persuaded the group to drop the amendment requiring Indian consent. The conference agreed to two other compromises in their report. These allowed Indians four years for selection of allotments and provided for congressional authority for the disposal of money from the sale of surplus lands.⁵⁸

Welsh and his group had won a great victory. President Cleveland signed the bill on 8 February 1887.⁵⁹ The new measure contained ample authority for coercive assimilation. It allowed the reservations to be divided into individual allotments regardless of Indian sentiment. The allotments were to be held in trust by the federal government for twenty-five years. During this period, an Indian could not sell his allotment, nor could it be taxed by local or state governments.

After reservation lands had been allotted to individual Indians, any surplus or unallotted lands could be purchased by the federal government and subsequently opened to white settlement. The proceeds from the purchase of surplus lands were to be held in trust by the government, subject to appropriations by Congress, for the education and benefit of the Indians. Once the land was allotted, the Indians would become citizens of the United States and the state or territory in which they resided, and they would be given a fee simple patent to their allotment at the expiration of the trust period.⁶⁰

Bland was stunned by the quick turn of events.⁶¹ In an editorial in a journal called *The American*, Bland made a final plea for keeping reservations intact until the Indians requested change. With the right of self-government, Indians could learn the lifestyle, political system, and property concepts of white society. Thus, while becoming prepared for acculturation into society, they could be protected from the more cunning and unscrupulous whites.⁶² "Pursue this policy," Bland argued, "and in due time the Indians, as a people, will become civilized, industrious, law abiding citizens of the United States having voluntarily abandoned their laws, their religion, and system of holding land, and adopted ours."⁶³ Bland warned that if the Dawes General Allotment Act remained in force, "it would be but a few years before the majority of the [Indians] . . . would be in the condition of the gypsies of the Old World, but with less ability to eke out a subsistence than the gypsies possess."⁶⁴

In his urgent appeal to prevent the Dawes Act from being implemented, Bland received unexpected support from *The Pilot*, a Catholic journal published in Boston. On 4 June 1887, after a meeting with Bland, editor John Boyle O'Reilly published an editorial against the Dawes bill. Dawes immediately responded to the editorial, which he assumed was either inspired or actually written by Bland. In defending his bill, which was then before Congress, Dawes charged Bland with soliciting money from Red Cloud in return for restoring the chief's prestige.⁶⁵ In the following issue, in an article entitled "Senator Dawes Answered," O'Reilly printed Bland's response. Bland not only denounced Dawes for misrepresenting his bill, which Bland believed would cheat the Indians out of their lands, but he also called the accusations about Red Cloud "madness."⁶⁶ Two weeks later, in another article, Red Cloud was permitted to tell his side of the story. He called Dawes a liar and said that not only had Bland never sought payment from him; he had on occasion refused to accept money for his services.⁶⁷

Bland then challenged the proponents of the severalty legislation by threatening to contest its constitutionality, on the grounds that treaty titles allowed Indians the right to hold land collectively. Thus, he believed Congress could not legislate treaty land without the consent of the Indians, not even to change tribal title to individual allotments. Thomas Henry Tibbles, assistant editor of the *Omaha Herald* and a widely known activist in Indian affairs, alerted Dawes that the NIDA had raised a substantial sum of money, mostly from Indian support, to contest the bill. Tibbles then requested that Dawes initiate a resolution from the Judiciary Committee of the United States Senate to block Bland's attempt to contest the measure.⁶⁸ Bland's efforts to defeat the severalty bill and his threat of court action were met by accusations that he was in the pay of chiefs who opposed reform.⁶⁹ President Cleveland, in a meeting with prominent IRA reformer Charles C. Painter, expressed his wish that the IRA would reach an agreement with the NIDA.⁷⁰

When Bland's appeals fell on deaf ears, he directed his attention to stopping passage of Dawes's Sioux bill. Not all of those closely affiliated with the Sioux, however, wanted to maintain the reservation system. Mary C. Collins, a long-term missionary at Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, who favored more rapid assimilation, asked for citizenship and protection of the law. She wanted to prevent such men as "Bland from fencing [the Indians] in and shutting [them] away from the rest of our American brethren."⁷¹

Bland nonetheless urged the Sioux to fight the legislation, requesting money from the tribe to fight against the bill in Congress.⁷² As usual, the Sioux bill easily passed the Senate.

In the House, John H. King introduced a new bill. King's version provided the Indians a better return on their land but ignored the 1868 treaty stipulations for three-fourths consent of adult males before any land cession. Welsh and Dawes found the King bill unacceptable in this form. Welsh refused to cooperate with the NIDA in trying to stop the King bill. Replying to an offer from the president of the NIDA, Alexander Kent, Welsh argued that Bland's past conduct, particularly his personal attacks, made cooperation unreasonable.⁷³ Welsh and his associates were not about to permit Bland and the NIDA to shape new legislation. Pressures from the IRA forced the withdrawal of the unamended King bill from the floor, and it was redrafted to require consent for any land cession by three-fourths of the adult Sioux males. Once again the IRA and other reform organizations proved to be unbeatable foes. On 30 April 1888, Congress yielded to Welsh and his colleagues and authorized negotiations to open the Great Sioux Reservation.⁷⁴

The reduction of the Great Sioux Reservation in 1889, which the humanitarian reformers trusted would move the Sioux toward rapid assimilation, did not solve the immediate problems on the reservations. Following the massacre of Big Foot and his band at Wounded Knee in 1890, Bland visited Pine Ridge and Rosebud agencies, as a representative of the NIDA, to investigate and inquire into the condition of the tribe.⁷⁵ On 29 May 1891, he traveled to Pine Ridge. During his one-month stay, he conferred with Red Cloud and his followers, military personnel, and General Cyrus Bussey, assistant secretary of the interior. Although Bland reported that the Indians desired the removal of military authority, the atmosphere was stable. Assured that rumors of a Sioux outbreak were unfounded, he traveled on to Rosebud. Within hours of his arrival at Rosebud, he was placed under house arrest by agent George Wright and later expelled.⁷⁶ Bland's removal from Rosebud in 1891 ended his last futile attempt to intervene between the Indians and mainstream reformers.

Thereafter, Bland diverted his attention from Indian reform towards Populist causes. In 1891, he wrote *Esau; or the Banker's Victim*, a vigorous attack on bank monopoly and a National bank.⁷⁷ His last work on political reform was *People's Party Shot and Shell*, published during the election year 1892. It adhered rigidly to the Populist party platform, promoting every principle.⁷⁸

Two later books were devoted to medicine and religion: *How to Get Well and How to Keep Well* and *In the World Celestial*.⁷⁹ Bland and his wife spent three years, from 1895 to 1898, in Boston. The following year, they moved to Chicago, where he was elected secretary of the American Medical Union. In 1906, he published his last book, *Pioneers of Progress*, which contained thirty-two biographical sketches of his reform heroes. These "headlights of humanity," as he referred to them, included Abraham Lincoln, Grant Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Horace Greeley, Susan B. Anthony, Peter Cooper, and Alfred Meacham.⁸⁰ Bland died of natural causes at his home in Chicago on 3 January 1908.⁸¹

Bland and the NIDA had hoped to slow down, if not stop, the movement for allotment of Indian land. But his fight to allow the tribes freedom from interference was hopeless. Operating on the tenet that the tribal lifestyle had to be destroyed before the Indian could be assimilated, Welsh and his associates fiercely advocated the dissolution of the reservations by a coercive type of severalty.

Bland stood almost alone as an opponent against the overwhelming popularity of assimilation. Nevertheless, he persistently fought against the IRA and the views expressed at the Lake Mohonk conferences. Bland believed that during the Indians' gradual transition into the dominant society, the tribal unit and the reservation should be retained.⁸² His aims, in direct contrast with those of the mainline reformers, opposed, rather than encouraged, forced allotment on the theory that Indians had a right to determine their own affairs. Every issue of *The Council Fire* stressed Bland's belief in protecting the tribes from outside interference. The tribes, he insisted, would not be ready to progress until their members wanted new legislation. Any plan to force change on tribes was vigorously opposed.

Unfortunately, Bland's influence is difficult to measure. Perhaps he represented merely a nettle to Dawes, Welsh, and other Indian policy reformers of his generation. Yet his persistent opposition to forced allotment measures kept the allotment reform majority alert. Although Bland was unsuccessful in thwarting the policy of rapid assimilation, the position he maintained, in light of the disastrous consequences of the Dawes Act, is certainly worthy of attention. Intended to turn the Indians into self-supporting and happily assimilated citizens, the act and its subsequent modifications rapidly destroyed any prospects for the Indians' material progress or their satisfactory cultural adjustment to life in the dominant society.⁸³

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NOTES

1. T. A. Bland, *Life of Alfred B. Meacham: Together with His Lecture, the Tragedy of the Lava Beds* (Washington, DC: T. A. and M. C. Bland, 1883), 26.

2. Bland made his platform very clear in *The Council Fire* 6 (September 1883), 121–22:

The Indians should be allowed to hold their lands in common or divide them in severalty as they see fit. Justice says, let land in severalty and citizenship be given to Indians when they ask for them, but to force them upon them before they are capable of appreciating them and protecting themselves in them, would be palpably unjust. It has been tried repeatedly and in every case resulted disastrously to the Indians. Land in severalty, and citizenship must come and will come to the Indians. It is the ultimate solution to the Indian problem, but if justice is to guide the nation in this matter, it will demand that the change shall be made only so fast as the Indians shall become educated into the world wisdom and practical habits of the white men.

3. The quest for a single unifying ideology running through the reform activities of Thomas A. Bland, though attractive, is extremely tenuous. Unfortunately, the sources reveal few details about his political milieu and, more importantly, few larger explanations concerning his motivation and intent. I am not denying that sources might exist revealing this information; however, after an extensive search, I have not yet located them. I hope the evidence presented demonstrates that Bland was a habitual reformer with a radical bent.

4. T. A. Bland, *Pioneers of Progress* (Chicago: T. A. Bland & Co., 1906), 7–15. See also *Indiana Authors and Their Books, 1816-1916* (Crawfordsville, IN: R. E. Banta, 1949), 35, and *Representative Men of Indiana: A Biographical History of Eminent and Self Made Men of the State of Indiana*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Western Biographical Co., 1880), 3–4.

5. Interested in educating the public on health concerns, Bland lectured on phrenology and physiology in midwestern states and occasionally in the East. Between 1879 and 1881, he wrote the following books and pamphlets revealing his interest in the Greenback movement: *Life of Benjamin Butler* (New York: C. T. Dillingham, 1879), *The Spartan Band* (Washington, DC: R. H. Darby, 1879), *How to Grow Rich* (Washington, DC: R. H. Darby, 1881), and *The Reign of Monopoly* (Washington, DC: R. H. Darby, 1881). However, his reforming tendencies now reached beyond medicine and monetary concerns. After hearing of the injustices

perpetrated against the Indians, Bland was quickly drawn to their plight because of his altruistic nature.

6. For a useful discussion of Bland's close relationship with Meacham, see Edward Sterl Phinney, "Alfred B. Meacham, Promoter of Indian Reform" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1963), 229–75.

7. Although Bland first heard Meacham lecture two months earlier at Cooper Hall Institute, they had not been formally introduced (Bland, *Life of Alfred B. Meacham*, 8). Bland and Meacham shared similar backgrounds, and this may explain their immediate friendship. Meacham's parents had also immigrated to Orange County, Indiana, where he was born 29 April 1826. Meacham came from both Quaker and Methodist ancestry (*History of Lawrence, Orange and Washington Counties* [Chicago: Goodspeed, 1884], 530).

8. Meacham still suffered from wounds received during the Modoc attack and periodically required medical attention (*The Council Fire* 2 [September 1878]: 137). Meacham's lectures, given largely at churches, were intended to inform the public of the Indians' desperate plight. By 1 January 1878, almost six hundred lectures had been given in twenty-two states; by June 1879, over seven hundred had been delivered (*The Council Fire* 1 [May 1878]: 72; *ibid.* 2 [June 1879]: 85–86).

9. Although Meacham himself had limited success as a writer, Bland offered valuable literary expertise. Prior to 1878, Bland had become a recognized editor and author. In 1864, he became editor of *The Home Visitor*, a literary weekly published in Indianapolis. In 1870, Bland published his first book, *Farming as a Profession* (Boston: Loring), which sold ten thousand copies in a year. In April 1872, he took over the editorship of the *Scientific Farmer*. After moving the magazine to New York, Bland also assumed the editorship of *Farm and Fireside*. In 1875, he authored *History of New England*, for Vanslyke & Co. of Boston.

10. *The Council Fire* 1 (January 1878): 1. Each issue consisted of sixteen quarto pages, with two columns of print each. Four issues were published in Philadelphia before Meacham moved to Washington to be closer to the center of Indian affairs. Meacham published articles and lengthy letters from well-known individuals interested in Indian affairs. These included ethnologists J. Owen Dorsey and Albert S. Gatschet; Felix R. Brunot of the Board of Indian Commissioners; Stephen R. Riggs, missionary to the Santee Sioux; and George W. Manypenny, former commissioner of Indian affairs and author of *Our Indian Wards* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke and Company, 1880). The periodical described the ideal Indian agent and published letters from those considered "good." Also published were letters and articles by Indians, mostly dealing with local issues.

11. *The Council Fire* 1 (June 1878): 88. See also Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 90.

12. See *ibid.*, chapter 5. Prucha's seminal work, based on extensive research, offers a clear and systematic account of the "New Christian Reformers."

13. *The Council Fire* 6 (May 1883): 84.

14. William T. Hagan, *Indian Rights Association: The Herbert Welsh Years, 1882–1904* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 21; executive committee minutes, 18 September 1883, Indian Rights Association Papers (hereafter cited as IRAP), microfilm, Purdue University Library, West Lafayette, Indiana, reel 99; *ibid.*, 5 June 1883.

15. Hagan, *Indian Rights Association*, 28; Welsh, *Report of a Visit to the Great Sioux Reserve*, in IRAP, reel 102, A36, 33, 5.

16. Most Indians on the reservations were split into several factions designated by the reformers as "progressives" and "nonprogressives," or "conform-

ists" and noncomformists." In this instance, the term *progressives* refers to those Christian Indians who reformers determined were satisfactorily progressing along the path toward civilization and who had adopted the habits of the dominant white society. The term *nonprogressives* refers to non-Christian Indians who reformers felt resisted efforts to make the transition from traditional ways to acculturation or assimilation.

17. *The Council Fire* 7 (July–August 1884): 97.

18. *Ibid.* 6 (February 1883): 20.

19. Attacks on McGillicuddy appear throughout *The Council Fire*, volumes 6 and 7. For an example, see 6 (August 1883): 137–38; 6 (December 1883): 179–80; 7 (January 1884): 13.

20. *Ibid.* 6 (February 1883): 22.

21. Correspondence relating to this request is available in the National Archives. See Red Cloud to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 24 February 1883, entry 3674, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received (1885–1862); Teller to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 6 December 1884, entry 23229, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received (1885–1862); Bland to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 11 December 1884, entry 23631, Office of Indian Affairs, Letters Received (1885–1862).

22. Documents relating to Bland's expulsion and the subsequent controversy can be found in roll 279, file 279, Adjutant General's Office 1884 (M689), National Archives Microfilm Publications. The special file contains newspaper clippings, correspondence from Bland and McGillicuddy, and a report by Henry Ward, an inspector sent out to investigate. The story of Bland's visit is told in James C. Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 294–95; George E. Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 96–99. Compare with the agent's own account recorded in Julie B. McGillicuddy (the agent's second wife), *McGillicuddy Agent: A Biography of Dr. Valentine T. McGillicuddy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1941), 221–25.

23. Henry L. Dawes, *The Case of McGillicuddy: Senator Dawes Explains the Trouble at the Sioux Agencies*, reprinted from the *Springfield Republican*, 7 August 1884. Printed in pamphlet form in IRAP, reel 102, A16. Compare with *The Council Fire* 8 (April 1885): 49–50.

24. Hagan, *Indian Rights Association*, 37.

25. Garrett to Secretary of Interior Lamar, 14 April 1885, in Office of Indian Affairs, entry 8318, Letters Received (1885–62), National Archives.

26. *The Council Fire* 8 (April 1884): 49–50.

27. *Ibid.* 8 (February 1885): 36.

28. McGillicuddy, *McGillicuddy Agent*, 248–50; Olson, *Red Cloud and the Sioux Problem*, 304–305.

29. A House committee investigation of the history of land allotment in 1879 found only two of fourteen instances in which the practice might be judged successful. *House Report 188*, 45th Congress, 3d session, serial 1867, 1–38.

30. Senator Coke of Texas introduced the bill before the end of the second session of the 46th Congress, and it was thoroughly discussed during the last of January 1881.

31. *Lake Mohonk Proceedings*, 1884, in IRAP, reel 102, A22: 7.

32. *The Council Fire* 7 (January 1884): 7. The Coke bill, in this form, safeguarded the rights of the Indians by providing for approval of two-thirds of the adult male Indians before a reservation could be divided up.

33. Lyman Abbott to H. L. Dawes, 20 July 1885, container 27, General Correspondence 1885–87, Henry L. Dawes Papers, Library of Congress; Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis*, 245.

34. James W. Denver was appointed president of the organization. Denver was a former governor of the Kansas territory and a prominently mentioned candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1884. Byron Sunderland, former chaplain of the Senate, became the vice president. Other members of the organization's executive committee included Frederick P. Stanton, seventh governor of Kansas Territory; at least one ethnologist, the Reverend J. Owen Dorsey, who wrote many monographs on Indian social institutions and worked in the American Bureau of Ethnology; John H. Oberly, then superintendent of Indian schools.

35. *Preamble, Platform, and Constitution of the National Indian Defense Association* (Philadelphia: Rufus H. Darby, 1885). See also *The Council Fire* 8 (December 1885): 174–76.

36. *The Council Fire* 9 (February 1886): 28.

37. *Corpus Juris Secundum: A Complete Restatement of the Entire American Law as Developed by All Reported Cases* (Brooklyn, NY: American Law Book Co., 1944), 693. Indians had, at most, only a right of occupancy based on aboriginal possession and occupancy. Upon European settlement of America, the principle was exerted or acknowledged by all European nations that discovery followed by actual possession gave title to the government by whose subjects or by whose authority it was made, not only against other European governments, but against the Native Americans themselves. Thus, the underlying fee simple title to the lands subject to original Indian title was held by the sovereign nation, generally the United States. Although the ultimate absolute title rested with the European settlers and later the United States, the Indians retained the rights of possession and occupancy. Following John Marshall's landmark decision in *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. McIntosh* (1823), and later in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), only the United States could extinguish the tribal right of occupancy, and the tribes could not sell their aboriginal lands without approval of the sovereign nation. See also Felix S. Cohen's *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* (Charlottesville, VA: Michie Bobbs-Merrill, 1982), 487.

38. *The Council Fire* 9 (February 1886): 28.

39. *The Council Fire* 8 (January 1886): 1. Bland points to the example of the Five Civilized Tribes in numerous issues of *The Council Fire*. Compare with *ibid.* 8 (February 1885): 17–18; *ibid.* 8 (October 1885): 137–40; *ibid.* 9 (April 1886): 54; *ibid.* 9 (June 1886): 92.

40. Bland maintained that "200 to 300 of the Indians of Indian Territory, nearly all of the ministers in that Territory, and a great majority of the missionaries" belonged to his organization (*Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners* [Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1887]: 124). This relationship is also hinted at in Francis Paul Prucha, "The Board of Indian Commissioners and the Delegates of the Five Tribes," in *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 56 (Fall 1987): 261.

41. *The Council Fire* 9 (February 1886), 28. Willard served as the legal backbone for the NIDA. He provided Bland's organization with invaluable insight and experience. Willard had served as a former South Carolina supreme court chief justice and had helped interpret many of the important legal questions arising in South Carolina following the Civil War. For more information on Willard's background, see Ulysses Robert Brooks, *South Carolina Bench and Bar*, vol. 1 (Columbia, SC: The State Company, 1908), 36–39, 56–57, 156. For additional

information on Willard's legal views, see Amiel Jenkins Willard, *An Examination of the Law of Personal Rights to Discover the Principles of Law, as Ascertained from the Practical Rules of the Law, and Harmonized with the Nature of Social Relations* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882).

42. Ibid.

43. *The Sioux Bill* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1886), in IRAP, reel 102, A21.

44. Ibid.

45. *Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners* (Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1884), 11; *Lake Mohonk Proceedings* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1884), 16.

46. Dawes's Sioux bill passed in the Senate on 16 April 1884; when reintroduced in the 49th Congress on 8 December 1885, it passed again on 1 February 1886. *Senate Journal*, 49th Congress, 1st session, serial 2332, 49, 232.

47. Out of frustration, the Indian Rights Association issued two pamphlets: *Helplessness of the Indians before the Law; with an Outline of Proposed Legislation* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1886); in IRAP, reel 102, A63; and *Oleomargarine versus the Indian* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1886), in IRAP, reel 102, A52.

48. *The Council Fire* 9 (March 1886): 39.

49. Ibid. 9 (April 1886): 58, 60. Sunderland probably knew his way around congressional circles. Ordained as a Presbyterian minister, he served as chaplain of the U. S. senate from 1861–64 and again in 1873–79. He devoted much of his time to leadership positions in philanthropic organizations around the Washington, D. C. area. For more background information on Bryon Sunderland, see *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, vol. 10 (New York: James T. White & Co., 1900), 71.

50. For examples of opposition to the Sioux bill, see the following issues of *The Council Fire*: 9 (March 1886); *ibid.* (April 1886); November–December 1886. Judge A. J. Willard presents a lengthy objection to the bill in the June 1886 issue.

51. Hagan, *The Indian Rights Association*, 57.

52. Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 35.

53. Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis*, 248; *Senate Journal*, 49th Congress, 1st session, serial 2332, 49.

54. J. P. Kinney traced the notion back as early as 1633. See J. P. Kinney, *A Continent Lost—A Civilization Won: Indian Land Tenure in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1937), 82.

55. Herbert Welsh, *The Indian Problem: Secretary Welsh of the Indian Rights Association Reviews and Criticizes Dr. Bland's Recent Statements—Dr. Sunderland a Self-Confessed Novice* (Philadelphia, 1886), in IRAP, reel 102, A70.

56. Frank Wood to H. L. Dawes, 23 December 1886, container 27, General Correspondence 1885–87, Henry L. Dawes Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

57. In an earlier edition of his journal, Bland agreed to accept the bill in this form. See *The Council Fire* 9 (June 1886): 110.

58. The sequence of events can be followed in *Senate Journal*, 49th Congress, 2d session, serial 2447, 81–82, 90–91, 98–99, 124, 140, 186, 198, 308, and in similar sections of the *House Journal*, serial 2459. See also *Congressional Record*, XVII, 1558–59, 1688, 1762–64; XVIII, 225–26, 972–74. For a thorough treatment of the bill's history, see Loring Benson Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren: The Reformation of*

United States Indian Policy, 1865–1887 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1942), 185–87; and Prucha, *American Indian Policy in Crisis*, 250–52.

59. 24 *United States Statutes* 388–91.

60. *Ibid.* Only the Five Civilized Tribes, the Osage, and several small bands in the Indian Territory were exempted from the provisions of the Dawes Act.

61. Bland's version of the events appears in T. A. Bland, *The Indian Problem—What Shall We Do with Him?* (Washington, DC: National Indian Defence Association, 1887).

62. T. A. Bland, "The New Indian Policy: Land in Severalty," *The American* 14 (21 May 1887): 73–74.

63. *Ibid.*, 74.

64. *Ibid.* Bland was quoting a remark made by General Francis A. Walker.

65. Henry L. Dawes, "Senator Dawes Defends His Bill," *The Pilot* 50 (18 June 1887): 1–2.

66. Thomas A. Bland, "Senator Dawes Answered," *The Pilot* 50 (25 June 1887): 2.

67. Red Cloud, "Red Cloud Speaks," *The Pilot* 50 (9 July 1887): 1.

68. T. H. Tibbles to H. L. Dawes, 16 March, 1887, container 28, General Correspondence 1887–89, Henry L. Dawes Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D. C. Frank Wood of the Boston Indian Citizenship Committee also warned Dawes that the "Bland Whale" (in reference to his large size) had collected a large sum of money to test the constitutionality of the severalty bill in the Supreme Court. Frank Wood to H. L. Dawes, 10 March 1887, container 28, General Correspondence 1887–89, Henry L. Dawes Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D. C.

69. Indian Rights Association, *Friendship That Asks for Pay: Pretended Friends of the Indians and Their Methods* (Philadelphia: Indian Rights Association, 1887) in IRAP, reel 102, A75.

70. *Ibid.* Painter's reply spelled out the differences between the organizations. Painter responded,

No Sir! Our Views of the policy to be pursued are diametrically opposite We are entirely opposed to the ideas of the Association. It seems to me as if they are defending the Indian's right to be an Indian, and would perpetuate the conditions which would force him to be an Indian.

71. Mary C. Collins to H. L. Dawes, February 1887, container 27, General Correspondence 1885–87, Henry L. Dawes Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D. C.

72. George Sword to commissioner of Indian affairs, 12 October 1887, entry 27572, Letters Received, National Archives, Record Group 75.

73. Welsh to Alexander Kent, 10 March 1888, in IRAP, reel 69.

74. For specific provisions of the bill, see 25 *United States Statutes*, 94–104.

75. In a pamphlet entitled *A Brief History of the Late Military Invasion of the Home of the Sioux* (Washington, DC: National Indian Defence Association, 1891), Bland blamed the military for the massacre but saw "good results of the invasion," in that it would arouse public sympathy for the Sioux plight and force the government to fulfill its pledges to them.

76. Bland's visit to the Pine Ridge and Rosebud agencies produced numerous correspondence to the Office of Indian Affairs, now contained in the National Archives. See George Wright to commissioner of Indian affairs, 11 June 1891,

entry 21019, Record Group (hereafter referred to as RG) 75; Wright to commissioner of Indian affairs, 20 July 1891, entry 27528, RG 75; Bland to commissioner of Indian affairs, 1 July 1891, entry 28442, RG 75; Bland to commissioner of Indian affairs, 31 July 1891, entry 27758, RG 75; entry 30469, 11, 12 August 1891, 4 enclosures, RG 75.

77. Thomas A. Bland, *Esau; or the Banker's Victim* (Washington, DC: T. A. Bland & Co., 1892).

78. *Idem*, *People's Party Shot and Shell* (Chicago: C. H. Kerr and Co., 1892).

79. *Idem*, *How to Get Well and How to Keep Well* (Boston: Plymouth Publishing Co., 1894); *In the World Celestial* (Chicago: The Plymouth Publishing Co., 1892).

80. *Idem*, *Pioneers of Progress*.

81. Death certificate filed with the Bureau of Vital Statistics, Department of Health, City of Chicago.

82. One recent economist, Leonard Carlson, argues that the Indians were making slow progress toward self-supporting agriculture, but the passage of the Dawes Act led to a significant decline in farming. See Leonard J. Carlson, *Indians, Bureaucrats, and the Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).

83. Donald J. Berthrong, "Legacies of the Dawes Act: Bureaucrats and Land Thieves at the Cheyenne-Arapaho Agencies of Oklahoma," *Arizona and the West* 21 (Winter 1979): 335-54. This is an excellent case study of the disastrous consequences of the Dawes Act and its modifications on the Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation.