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Military Academy West of the Mississippi River

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MARCH 19, 1884.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. HARRISON, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the resolution of the Senate of December 5, 1883, instructing the committee to inquire into the policy and expediency of creating a military academy west of the Mississippi River, for the training and education of Indian youths and men up to a proper age as soldiers, and of admitting them, when qualified, into the Regular Army as enlisted men, having considered the same, would respectfully report:

That the committee sought the views of the Secretaries of War and Interior upon the subject-matter of this resolution.

The correspondence with the Secretary of War is as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, February 25, 1884.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th ultimo, inclosing, with request for information as to the views of this Department upon the subject, a copy of a resolution of the Senate of December 5, 1883, instructing the Committee on Military Affairs "to inquire into the policy and expediency of creating a military academy west of the Mississippi River for the training and education of Indian youths and men up to a proper age as soldiers, and of admitting them, when qualified, into the Regular Army as enlisted men."

In reply I beg to state that the subject was referred to the Lieutenant-General of the Army, and to invite attention to the inclosed copy of his report thereon, dated the 16th instant.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ROBERT T. LINCOLN,
Secretary of War.

HON. BENJAMIN HARRISON,
Of the Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, February 16, 1884.

Respectfully returned to the honorable Secretary of War. I am of the opinion that to help along the civilization of the Indians by the education of their children is a matter of great importance, but I doubt if any process whatever can, in one or two generations, develop the qualities necessary for the rank and file of our Army.

Used as scouts, they have performed valuable service in the past, and I have no doubt they will in the future be used to advantage in that way; but our experience has proven that they can only be utilized for short periods of enlistments, viz, three or four months.

Soldiers should possess the attributes of civilized men, and until the Indians have reached that plane in their evolution, it will be impossible to draw from them the material out of which good soldiers can be made. They do not possess stability or tenacity of purpose, and are not sufficiently amenable to discipline. They cannot appreciate responsibility or the sacredness of an oath, and I am convinced no system

can be devised which will, in any reasonable period of time, do away with the effect of long ages of barbarism or make the Indians other than what they are now—a race so distinctive from that governing in this country that it would be neither wise nor expedient to recruit our Army from their ranks.

P. H. SHERIDAN,
Lieutenant-General.

The response of the Secretary of the Interior is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, February 7, 1884.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 29th ultimo, inclosing, with request for my views, a copy of Senate resolution of December 5 last, in relation to the establishment of "a military academy west of the Mississippi River, for the training and education of Indian youths and men, up to a proper age, as soldiers; and of admitting them, when qualified, into the Regular Army as enlisted men," &c.

The subject having been referred to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, he expresses the opinion "that as the Indians, with little or no training, make faithful and efficient police, taking much interest and pride in their duties," he considers "the discipline to which they are subject as police, though slight, very beneficial," and therefore believes "that an academy such as is contemplated in the resolution would be not only beneficial to the Indians, but, in the end, of much advantage to the Government."

The results obtained from the efforts made to educate the Indian youth in industrial and mechanical pursuits demonstrate their capacity for receiving such instruction and training.

The War Department has for a long time past employed Indians as scouts, and many of them have rendered valuable, faithful, and efficient service in that capacity.

The service and occupation of a soldier is, perhaps, more suited to their tastes, inclination, and habits than any other civilized pursuit.

It is believed that with proper training and discipline a force of Indians could soon be organized that could be made available for valuable service in the Military Establishment of the Government. It is, however, my opinion that the training and education of the Indian youths at the proposed institution should not be solely such as will fit them for service as soldiers. While that might be the main object, they should receive such training, education, &c., as will fit them for self-reliance and citizenship.

Very respectfully,

H. M. TELLER,
Secretary.

Hon. BENJAMIN HARRISON,
United States Senate.

Your committee agree in the main with the opinion expressed by Lieutenant-General Sheridan. There can be no objection, we think, to the introduction into the Indian schools of the study of tactics, and the organization of the young men of proper age into companies for military exercise. We do not believe, however, that the project for establishing a military school for the purpose indicated in the resolution is either wise or feasible.