

3



WHEN CULTURES COLLIDE

WOUNDED KNEE

"The 'Great American Desert,'" Charles Nordhoff wrote in 1873, "has disappeared at the snort of the iron horse . . . The very desert becomes fruitful, and in the midst of the sagebrush and alkali country, you will see corn, wheat, potatoes, and fruits of different kinds growing luxuriantly." For Nordhoff, as for his fellow Americans, settling the West was a poetic ideal, a hymn of progress:

One can not help but speculate upon what kind of men we Americans shall be when all these now desolate plains are filled; when cities shall be found where now only the lonely depot or the infrequent cabin stands; when the iron and coal of these regions shall have become, as they soon must, the foundation of great manufacturing populations; and when, perhaps, the whole continent will be covered by our Stars and Stripes

Americans' prose soared as they contemplated their prosperous and powerful republic stretching from sea to shining sea

In the most concrete sense, the expansion of white settlers westward was part of the same set of processes transforming the rest of society. Imagine, for example, a Nebraska farmer purchasing a Currier and Ives lithograph for his home in 1875, perhaps a scene of pioneers making their way across the continent. He buys the lithograph from a store in Omaha, where the pictures just came off the train from New York. He sells his wheat in the same city, and some of it may find its way onto the tables of railroad workers, who at that moment are worried about rumors of an impending wage cut. Or perhaps our farmer looks at the lithograph and chooses not to buy it, because the low price he will get for his wheat means another lean year in these troubled economic times. He wonders for a moment how he will ever pay off the bank for the new threshing machine that allowed him to grow more wheat. Farmers mechanize, he muses, and grow bigger crops, and, as a result, prices go down. The point, of course, is that industrialization, urbanization, and commercial exchange were all part of a related set of processes. The railroad was one of the ties that bound western farmers to eastern laborers. And underlying the entire transformation—manufacturing, shipping, growing, processing, and financing—was the market economy

As the quotation from Nordhoff reveals—and as Currier and Ives lithographs of westward expansion made palpable—prosperity, progress, productivity, and individual betterment were highly charged ideals. The marketplace was not just a system of exchange; it generated its own ideology. But shining visions of progress usually did not include those whose land was taken; rather, the myth of progress justified the taking.

When colonists first came to British North America, there were already millions of native people living in this “uninhabited” land, this “desert,” as some colonists called it. European diseases, to which the indigenous peoples had no immunity, quickly wiped out most of them. As whites colonized the new lands, then, they faced greatly weakened tribes that, when not outnumbered, were outgunned. Some groups, after resisting the whites, were simply destroyed, such as the Pequots of New England. The large southeastern tribes—the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws—were finally conquered during the presidency of Andrew Jackson and forced to relocate west to lands that would be theirs “forever.”

By the late nineteenth century, the Sioux of the northern plains were one of the largest and most powerful tribal cultures remaining. During the colonial era, they had occupied lands between Lake Superior and the headwaters of the Mississippi River, but the Ojibwas, armed by the French, drove them west to the plains. The Sioux adapted well to the new environment, cultivating their skills as horsemen and hunters and following the enormous herds of buffalo that roamed the western prairies. Until the Civil War, they ranged from Minnesota to the Rockies and from the Yellowstone River to the Platte, and, with millions of buffalo and thousands of horses, they were masters of these lands.

In 1868, with settlement of the plains by whites accelerating, the federal government sought direct control over the native inhabitants. The Sioux agreed to a treaty granting them the western half of the present state of South Dakota and portions of Nebraska and Wyoming, “for their absolute and undisturbed use and occupation,” along with rights to hunt for buffalo beyond reservation boundaries. The treaty seemed to provide not only an endless supply of food, but also peace. “From this day forth,” the treaty stated, “all wars between the parties of this agreement shall cease forever.” In a few years, however, marksmen and trappers had hunted the buffalo to near extinction, while masses of white settlers had poured in on the new railroads. When gold—the yellow metal that they worship and that makes them crazy,” as one Sioux called it—was discovered on the tribal reservation in the Black Hills, a massive new influx of whites into the region commenced.

Bands of Sioux resisted the occupation of their lands, but as sporadic violence broke out on both sides, the government sent in the army to round up the “hostiles.” George Armstrong Custer led the Seventh Cavalry into the Sioux country as part of a larger expedition under the command of General Alfred Terry. In the spring of 1876, Custer divided his forces into three groups to assault the enemy near the Little Bighorn. The entire regiment—over 250 men—was killed by a force of at least 2,500 Indians. The government promptly sent in more troops, who arrested several chiefs and chased the main leader of the uprising, Sitting Bull, and his people into Canada.

Government officials from the military and from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (under the Department of the Interior) now drew up a new treaty, and an accom-

modating chief, Red Cloud, signed for the tribe. The Sioux lost one-third of their reservation, including the sacred Black Hills. A people who had been hunter-gatherers, with no experience, habits, or capital for agriculture, were left on poor land, without the buffalo herds that had provided food, shelter, clothes, and goods for barter. After another decade of land speculators greedy for profits, railroads coveting rights of way, and squatters clamoring for land, the federal government in 1889 seized half of the remaining Sioux territory and, in the process, divided the one large reservation into five separate units.

In exchange for all of these concessions, the government promised to supply food (which often never came), clothing (which always arrived after the arctic cold), schools for Indian children (where tribal ways were demeaned), and reservation administrators (who were often incompetent political hacks). The old way of life was undermined: agents of the federal government forbade warrior societies and honors, usurped the powers of the chiefs, and banned tribal religious customs, holidays, and ceremonies. The Sioux and other tribes were forced to trade the freedom of the plains for broken promises and confinement to the reservation.

In the midst of this crisis, a new religion swept through the tribes of the western United States, a religion containing both Christian and Native American elements, as seen in the two names given to the movement: the Messiah Craze, as whites called it, and the Ghost Dance. By 1890, word had spread to the plains of a Paiute chief in Nevada named Wavoka who claimed to be "the Christ," returned to earth as an Indian. Throughout the western territories, Native Americans of various tribes listened to Wavoka's message and followed his advice. He promised to renew the earth to what it had been before the coming of the whites. In the spring of 1891, when the grass grew knee-high, the earth would be covered with fresh soil, running water, trees, and buffalo. And all of the old Indians who had died would return as young men and women. Those who did the Ghost Dance would be lifted into the sky, and the new soil would roll over the old and bury the whites; the dancers would then descend to earth and dwell there with their ancestors.

Native Americans across the West donned ghost shirts, painted with symbols that allegedly made them impervious to white men's bullets, and they danced the Ghost Dance. For the Sioux—starved and humiliated, their numbers depleted—the promise of living in peace and plenty was irresistible. Widows would be reunited with their husbands, hunting bands would once again be able to provide food, and an *Indian* messiah would take revenge on the white oppressors. With promises like these, the reservations resounded with the songs and steps of the sacred dance.

Reports of the "Messiah Craze" greatly alarmed whites. There is no doubt that the new religion gave Native Americans the confidence to assert themselves in ways that reservation agents found alarming and citizens saw as threatening. Certainly the idea of a Native American messiah offered tribal members a sense of pride and a new militancy. Many whites, on the other hand, jumped to the conclusion that the Ghost Dance merely proved how wild and barbaric the Native Americans were or that the new religion was a cover for a treacherous attack. Soon army troops were again streaming west, and Native American bands, feeling threatened, began leaving the reservations. The scene was set for tragedy.

Introduction to Document 1

Anthropologists call phenomena like the Ghost Dance *revitalization movements*. In times of social stress, people often go back to important elements of their culture and reshape them in powerful ways. The rejuvenated customs or beliefs become a focus of group solidarity and cultural revival.

Z. A. Parker, a teacher on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, described the Ghost Dance she witnessed at White Clay Creek, June 20, 1890.

DOCUMENT 1

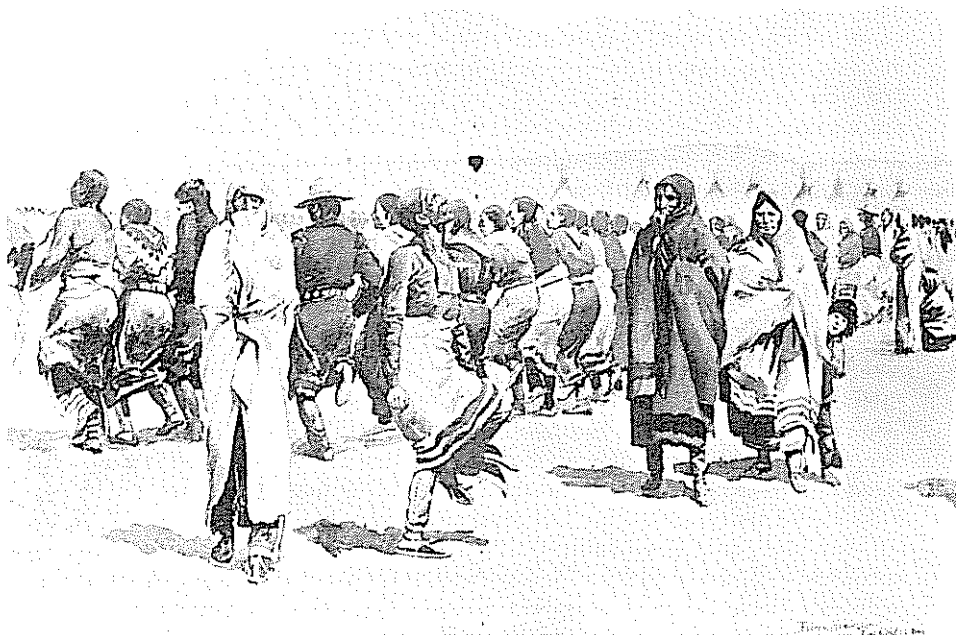
"THE GHOST DANCE OBSERVED"

Z. A. Parker

We drove to this spot about 10.30 oclock on a delightful October day. We came upon tents scattered here and there in low, sheltered places long before reaching the dance ground. Presently we saw over three hundred tents placed in a circle, with a large pine tree in the center, which was covered with strips of cloth of various colors, eagle feathers, stuffed birds, claws, and horns—all offerings to the Great Spirit. The ceremonies had just begun. In the center, around the tree, were gathered their medicine-men; also those who had been so fortunate as to have had visions and in them had seen and talked with friends who had died. A company of fifteen had started a chant and were marching abreast, others coming in behind as they marched. After marching around the circle of tents they turned to the center, where many had gathered and were seated on the ground.

I think they wore the ghost shirt or ghost dress for the first time that day. I noticed that these were all new and were worn by about seventy men and forty women. The wife of a man called Return-from-scout had seen in a vision that her friends all wore a similar robe, and on reviving from her trance she called the women together and they made a great number of the sacred garments. They were of white cotton cloth. The women's dress was cut like their ordinary dress, a loose robe with wide, flowing sleeves, painted blue in the neck, in the shape of a three-cornered handkerchief, with moon, stars, birds, etc., interspersed with real feathers, painted on the waist and sleeves. While dancing they wound their shawls about their waists, letting them fall to within 3 inches of the ground, the fringe at the bottom. In the hair, near the crown, a feather was tied. I noticed an absence of any manner of head ornaments, and, as I knew their vanity and fondness for them, wondered why it was. Upon making inquiries I found they discarded everything they could which was made by white men.

The ghost shirt for the men was made of the same material—shirts and leggings painted in red. Some of the leggings were painted in stripes running up and down, others running around. The shirt was painted blue around the neck, and the whole garment was fantastically sprinkled with figures of birds, bows and arrows, sun, moon, and stars, and everything they saw in nature. Down the outside of the sleeve were rows of feathers tied by the quill ends and left to fly in the breeze, and also a row around the neck and up and down the outside of the leggings. I noticed that a number had stuffed birds, squirrel beads, etc., tied in their long hair. The faces of all were painted red with a black half-moon on the forehead or on one cheek.



Oglala Sioux Ghost Dance, drawing by Frederic Remington. (Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth)

As the crowd gathered about the tree the high priest, or master of ceremonies, began his address, giving them directions as to the chant and other matters. After he had spoken for about fifteen minutes they arose and formed in a circle. As nearly as I could count, there were between three and four hundred persons. One stood directly behind another, each with his hands on his neighbor's shoulders. After walking about a few times, chanting, "Father, I come," they stopped marching, but remained in the circle, and set up the most fearful, heart-piercing wails I ever heard—crying, moaning, groaning, and shrieking out their grief, and naming over their departed friends and relatives, at the same time taking up handfuls of dust at their feet, washing their hands in it, and throwing it over their heads. Finally, they raised their eyes to heaven, their hands clasped high above their heads, and stood straight and perfectly still, invoking the power of the Great Spirit to allow them to see and talk with their people who had died. This ceremony lasted about fifteen minutes, when they all sat down where they were and listened to another address, which I did not understand, but which I afterwards learned were words of encouragement and assurance of the coming messiah.

When they rose again, they enlarged the circle by facing toward the center, taking hold of hands, and moving around in the manner of school children in their play of "needle's eye." And now the most intense excitement began. They would go as fast as they could, their heads moving from side to side, their bodies swaying, their arms, with hands gripped tightly in their neighbors', swinging back and forth with all their might. If one, more weak and frail, came near falling, he would be jerked up and into position until tired nature gave way. The ground had been worked and worn by many feet, until the fine,

flour-like dust lay light and loose to the depth of two or three inches. The wind, which had increased, would sometimes take it up, enveloping the dancers and hiding them from view. In the ring were men, women, and children; the strong and the robust, the weak consumptive, and those near to death's door. They believed those who were sick would be cured by joining in the dance and losing consciousness. From the beginning they chanted, to a monotonous tune, the words—

Father, I come;
 Mother, I come;
 Brother, I come;
 Father, give us back our arrows.

All of which they would repeat over and over again until first one and then another would break from the ring and stagger away and fall down. One woman fell a few feet from me. She came toward us, her hair flying over her face, which was purple, looking as if the blood would burst through; her hands and arms moving wildly; every breath a pant and a groan; and she fell on her back, and went down like a log. I stepped up to her as she lay there motionless, but with every muscle twitching and quivering. She seemed to be perfectly unconscious. Some of the men and a few of the women would run, stepping high and pawing the air in a frightful manner. Some told me afterwards that they had a sensation as if the ground were rising toward them and would strike them in the face. Others would drop where they stood. One woman fell directly into the ring, and her husband stepped out and stood over her to prevent them from trampling upon her. No one ever disturbed those who fell or took any notice of them except to keep the crowd away.

They kept up dancing until fully 100 persons were lying unconscious. Then they stopped and seated themselves in a circle, and as each one recovered from his trance he was brought to the center of the ring to relate his experience. Each told his story to the medicine-man and he shouted it to the crowd. Not one in ten claimed that he saw anything. I asked one Indian—a tall, strong fellow, straight as an arrow—what his experience was. He said he saw an eagle coming toward him. It flew round and round, drawing nearer and nearer until he put out his hand to take it, when it was gone. I asked him what he thought of it. "Big lie," he replied. I found by talking to them that not one in twenty believed it. After resting for a time they would go through the same performance, perhaps three times a day. They practiced fasting, and every morning those who joined in the dance were obliged to immerse themselves in the creek.

Introduction to Document 2

The Ghost Dance spread, and by autumn, government officials in the West had made their fears known in Washington. The following letters were sent by agents on the reservations to their superiors in the Office of Indian Affairs. The letters give a sense of the anxiety that the Ghost Dance was engendering among whites. It was on the basis of such information that military forces were dispatched to prevent a Sioux outbreak.

DOCUMENT 2

LETTERS FROM RESERVATIONS BY
UNITED STATES AGENTS

*United States Indian Service, Office of Indian Agent
Pine Ridge Agency, S. Dak., October 12, 1890*

Sir:

I have the honor of replying to your letter marked L 30046-1890, dated October 3, 1890, referring to our Indians participating in certain religious exercises known as the "ghost dance."

In assuming charge of this agency I did so under embarrassing circumstances. I feel that my administration will be badly handicapped owing to the sad mess into which affairs have gotten here. These ghost dances have assumed such proportions that they become very serious. . . . The mistake was made by not nipping it in the bud four months ago when it was in its infancy. They have been permitted to continue in these foolish and harmful practices until they are entirely beyond the control of the police. As yet I have taken no definite action in the matter, my object being to thoroughly acquaint myself with the situation, so that I could act intelligently and wisely when I did make a move.

In my judgment there are but two ways to settle it: (1) The course that I am now pursuing is to use every effort possible and bring every influence to bear upon the chiefs to get them to pull out of the thing, which would stop it; (2) if persuasive measures fail, then force them to obey by using the military. I very much dislike the idea of bringing the military here, as it would likely prejudice many of the Indians against me during my entire administration, thereby destroying what good I might be able to do under other circumstances.

I intend to act very cautiously until I am convinced that it can not be suppressed without the military, and then I trust I will have the hearty cooperation of the Department.

It is useless for me to undertake to describe the foolish manner in which they conduct themselves during these dances. I can only say it injures them physically, mentally, and morally, and undoes all the Department has done for them in the past. What makes the situation so serious is that every Indian on the reservation is armed with a Winchester rifle, and when they are requested to stop these dances they strip themselves and are ready to fight. Why any Indian on the reservation is permitted to have a gun I am not informed. They certainly have no use for them except to endanger the lives of those who try to suppress them in some wrongdoing. If it were not for this fact alone, we would not have any trouble in controlling them with the police. . . .

Very respectfully,

D. F. Royer

United States Indian Agent

Hon. T. J. Morgan

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.

*United States Indian Service
Rosebud Agency, S. Dak., November 2, 1890*

Sir:

I deem it my duty to call the attention of the Department to the extremely disaffected and troublesome state of a portion of the Indians on this and other Sioux agencies.

The coming new order of things as preached to this people during the past seven months is the return to earth of their forefathers, the buffalo, elk, and all other game, the complete restoration of their ancient habits, customs, and power, and the annihilation of the white man. This movement, which some three weeks ago it was supposed had been completely abandoned, while not so openly indulged in, is continually gaining new adherents, and they are daily becoming more threatening and defiant of the authorities.

This latter phase of the case may in a measure be attributed to the scant supply of rations, to which my attention has been almost daily called by the Indians, and especially to the reduction in the quantity of beef as compared to the issue of former years. They kill cows and oxen issued to them for breeding and working purposes, make no secret of doing so, and openly defy arrest. They say that the cattle were issued to them by the Great Father and it is their right to do as they please with them. This evil is increasing daily and if not checked there will be but very few of this class of stock left on the reservation by spring. During the past week it is reported to me that two Indians in the Red Leaf Camp on Black White Creek had killed their cows for a feast at the ghost dance. I sent a policeman to bring them in; they refused to come.

The following day I sent two officers and eight policemen, and they returned without the men, reporting that after they arrived at the camp they were surrounded by seventy-five or more Indians, well armed and with plenty of ammunition, and they unanimously agreed that an attempt to arrest the offenders would have resulted in death to the entire posse. On Friday I sent the chief of police, with an interpreter, to explain matters and endeavor to bring the men in. They positively refused to come, and the chief of police reports that the matter is beyond the control of the police. This is one case which could be repeated indefinitely by attempting the arrest of parties guilty of the same offense.

The religious excitement aggravated by almost starvation is bearing fruits in this state of insubordination; Indians say they had better die fighting than to die a slow death of starvation, and as the new religion promises their return to earth, at the coming of the millennium, they have no great fear of death. To one not accustomed to the Indians, it is a hard matter to believe the confident assurance with which they look forward to the fulfillment of their Prophet's promise.

The time first set for the inauguration of the new era was next spring, but I am reliably informed that it has since and only lately been advanced to the new moon after the next one, or about December 11.

The indications are unmistakable; these Indians have within the past three weeks traded horses and everything else they could trade for arms and ammunition, and all the cash they became possessed of was spent in the same way.

One of the traders here reports that Indians within the last few days have come to his store and offered to sell receipts for wood delivered at the agency,

and for which no funds are on hand to pay them for one-third the value *in cash*. When asked what urgent necessity there was for such a sacrifice of receipts for less than their face value, they answered that they wanted *the cash* to buy ammunition.

These are some of the signs of the times and strongly indicate the working of the Indian mind.

To me, there appears to be but one remedy (and all here agree with me) unless the old order of things (the Indians controlling the agency) is to be reestablished, and that is a sufficient force of troops to prevent the outbreak which is imminent, and which any one of a dozen unforeseen causes may precipitate.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
E. B. Reynolds
Special United States Indian Agent

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs
 Washington, D.C.

United States Indian Service
Western Shoshone Agency, Nev., November 8, 1890

Sir:

The Indians of this reservation and vicinity have just concluded their second medicine dance, the previous one taking place in August last. They are looking for the coming of the Indian Christ, the resurrection of the dead Indians, and consequent supremacy of the Indian race. Fully one thousand people took part in the dance. While the best of order prevailed, the excitement was very great as morning approached, when the dancers were worn out mentally and physically. The medicine-men would shout that they could see the faces of departed friends and relatives moving about the circle. No pen can paint the picture of wild excitement that ensued; all shouted in a chorus, "Christ has come!" and then danced and sung until they fell in a confused and exhausted mass on the ground. The more intelligent ones freely admit that it is all foolishness, but dare not disobey the order of the medicine-men to attend. I apprehend no trouble beyond the loss of time and the general demoralizing effect of these large gatherings of people.

Several of the leading men have gone to Walker Lake to confer with a man that calls himself Christ; others have gone to Fort Hall to meet Indians from Montana and Dakota, to get the news from that section; in fact, the astonishing part of the business "is the fact that" all the Indians in the country seem to possess practically the same ideas and expect about the same result. So universal is this that I can not think but some designing white man or men are at the bottom of the whole matter, and yet there seems to be nothing beyond the merest suspicion to base that opinion on. . . .

Very respectfully,
William I. Plumb
United States Indian Agent

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs
 Washington, D.C.

*United States Indian Service, Office of Indian Agent
Pine Ridge Agency, S. Dak., November 12, 1890*

Sir:

I have the honor to submit a copy of a telegram I forwarded you this day,
viz

"The condition of affairs at this agency when I took charge, whether intentional or not, were to render my administration a failure. Orders of constitutional authority are daily violated and defied, and I am powerless to enforce them. The condition of affairs is going from bad to worse. Yesterday in attempting to arrest an Indian for violation of regulations the offender drew a butcher knife on the police and in less than two minutes he was reënforced by two hundred ghost dancers all armed and ready to fight, consequently the arrest was not made. To-day I received a communication from the offender stating that the policeman who attempted to enforce my orders must be discharged or I could expect trouble, and I was given four weeks to do it.

"The police force are overpowered and disheartened; we have no protection; are at the mercy of these crazy dancers.

"The situation is serious. I urgently request that I be permitted to proceed to Washington at once and confer with you personally, as a correct idea of the situation can not be conveyed otherwise. The Indians have received their beef and rations, and are going home, and there is no immediate danger until next big issue (four weeks from to-day). I can leave now without the service being injured, and I do hope you will grant my request, or let the blame rest where it belongs. I have no other object in view save the best interest of the service."

Royer, Agent

Commissioner of Indian Affairs
Washington, D C

Pine Ridge Agency, S. Dak., November 15, 1890

Indians are dancing in the snow and are wild and crazy. I have fully informed you that employes and Government property at this agency have no protection and are at the mercy of these dancers. Why delay by further investigation? We need protection and we need it now. The leaders should be arrested and confined in some military post until the matter is quieted, and this should be done at once.

Royer, Agent

Introduction to Document 3

William T. Selwyn was a full-blooded Sioux who worked for the U.S. government on the Yankton reservation as a policeman. When he learned that a man named Kuwapi from the Rosebud reservation was at Yankton teaching the Ghost Dance, Selwyn arrested him. He then interviewed his prisoner and reported his findings to Colonel E. W. Foster on November 22, 1890.

DOCUMENT 3

“ . . . NO WHITE PEOPLE IN THE OTHER WORLD . . . ”

Selwyn's Interview with Kuwapi

- Q Do you believe in the new messiah?—A. I somewhat believe it.
- Q What made you believe it?—A. Because I ate some of the buffalo meat that he (the new messiah) sent to the Rosebud Indians through Short Bull.
- Q Did Short Bull say that he saw the living herd of roaming buffaloes while he was with the son of the Great Spirit?—A. Short Bull told the Indians at Rosebud that the buffalo and other wild game will be restored to the Indians at the same time when the general resurrection in favor of the Indians takes place.
- Q You said a “general resurrection in favor of the Indians takes place”; when or how soon will this be?—A. The father sends word to us that he will have all these caused to be so in the spring, when the grass is knee high.
- Q You said “father;” who is this father?—A. It is the new messiah. He has ordered his children (Indians) to call him “father.”
- Q You said the father is not going to send the buffalo until the resurrection takes place. Would he be able to send a few buffaloes over this way for a sort of a sample, so as to have his children (Indians) to have a taste of the meat?—A. The father wishes to do things all at once, even in destroying the white race. . . .
- Q What other object could you come to by which you are led to believe that there is such a new messiah on earth at present?—A. The ghost dancers are fainted whenever the dance goes on.
- Q Do you believe that they are really fainted?—A. Yes.
- Q What makes you believe that the dancers have really fainted?—A. Because when they wake or come back to their senses they sometimes bring back some news from the unknown world, and some little trinkets, such as buffalo tail, buffalo meat, etc.
- Q What did the fainted ones see when they get fainted?—A. They visited the happy hunting ground, the camps, multitudes of people, and a great many strange people.
- Q What did the ghost or the strange people tell the fainted one or ones?—A. When the fainted one goes to the camp, he is welcomed by the relatives of the visitor (the fainted one), and he is also invited to several feasts.
- Q Were the people at Rosebud agency anxiously waiting or expecting to see all of their dead relatives who have died several years ago?—A. Yes.
- Q We will have a great many older folks when all the dead people come back, would we not?—A. The visitors all say that there is not a single old man nor woman in the other world—all changed to young.
- Q Are we going to die when the dead ones come back?—A. No; we will be just the same as we are today.

- Q. Did the visitor say that there is any white men in the other world?—
 A. No; no white people.
- Q. If there is no white people in the other world, where did they get their provisions and clothing?—A. In the other world, the messenger tells us that they have depended altogether for their food on the flesh of buffalo and other wild game; also, they were all clad in skins of wild animals.
- Q. Did the Rosebud agency Indians believe the new messiah, or the son of the Great Spirit?—A. Yes.
- Q. How do they show that they . . . believe in the new messiah?—A. They show themselves by praying to the father by looking up to heaven, and call him "father," just the same as you would in a church.
- Q. Have you ever been in a church?—A. No.
- Q. Do you faithfully believe in the new messiah?—A. I did not in the first place, but as I became more acquainted with the doctrines of the new messiah . . . I really believe in him.
- Q. How many people at Rosebud, in your opinion, believe this new messiah?—A. Nearly every one.
- Q. Did not the Rosebud people prepare to attack the white people this summer? While I was at Pine Ridge agency this summer the Oglalla Sioux Indians say they will resist against the government if the latter should try to put a stop to the messiah question. Did your folks at Rosebud say the same thing?—A. Yes . . .
- Q. You do not mean to say that the Rosebud Indians will try and cause an outbreak?—A. That seems to be the case . . .

Introduction to Documents 4 and 5

The following petitions were submitted by citizens' committees to the federal government. The first, addressed to the president from Mandan, North Dakota, makes clear the contest over resources between white settlers and native peoples. How did the issues of safety, economics, race, and culture blur together? The second petition, from Chadron, Nebraska, insists that all Sioux be disarmed and that their horses be taken away. Under what justification did the citizens of these towns expect government intervention in their behalf?

DOCUMENT 4

" . . . INDIANS ARMED TO THE TEETH . . . "

Mandan, N. Dak., November 18, 1890

Dear Sir:

The settlers who live in the country surrounding Mandan desire to urge strongly that the Indian Department from henceforth deny to Indians the right to carry arms or ammunition off their reservations. Game off the reser-

vations belongs to the white men anyway, and it is utterly impossible for the ordinary white man to see why the Indians should be permitted to roam all over the country off the reservations, as they do, armed to the teeth. Probably the authorities in Washington are not aware of the fact that these Indians go armed with the guns of the most improved and latest manufacture. The Government, which has assumed control of the red men, should, in our opinion, see to it that at least these weapons of such a dangerous character should not be carried over the country by men of the well known treacherous dispositions of the Sioux Indians. . . .

While this is being written there are camped within the city limits of Mandan over one hundred Indians, armed to the teeth, and our wives and our children are asking why these red men are allowed to molest and overawe and annoy us. Our people have stood the ravages of prairie fires, drought, and blizzards for a number of years and are still hopeful; but if, added to their other troubles, they are to be subjected to the depredations of Indians who are supposed to be under the control and subject to the Government they will have to leave the country.

The most conservative men in this community will be powerless to suppress the determination of the majority of the settlers to kill off every Indian that presents his face in this county in the future unless the Government does something to protect us. There are scores of men in this immediate neighborhood who were sufferers by the Minnesota massacres in 1862, and they don't propose to be annoyed and harassed any longer. Their property has been destroyed and their children and wives frightened by these worthless nomads, who are permitted by a lax Government to prowl over the country with arms that would not be allowed on the person of a white man. They will stand it no longer, and we ask that something be done to tighten the rules and regulations governing the actions of the Indians who are under the Indian agents of this locality.

R. M. Tuttle, Chairman

Jesse Ayers

P. B. Wickham

Joseph Miller

DOCUMENT 5

" . . . DEFRAUDING US OF VESTED RIGHTS . . . "

Chadron, Nebr., November 26, 1890

Dear Sir:

I am instructed by a meeting of the citizens of this town and county, held last evening, to forward you a copy of resolutions unanimously adopted at that meeting, which copy I herewith respectfully submit in print.

*Very obediently,
A. A. McFadon*

Secretary of the Interior
Washington, D C.

"Whereas it is public information that at this time quite a large body of United States troops has been ordered to and stationed at Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Standing Rock Indian Agencies on the Sioux Reservation by the Government for the purpose of preventing or suppressing an Indian outbreak; and

"Whereas we, the citizens of the State of Nebraska, living near the border of the Great Sioux Reservation, know whereof we speak; and

"Whereas at the invitation of the Government we have purchased our lands from it, paid our money therefore to it, and established our homes upon said lands with the implied assurance of Government protection; and

"Whereas the frequent recurrence of threatened Indian outbreaks is a source of alarm, resulting in injury, loss, and disaster to us, individually and collectively, retarding the further settlement and development of all the country bordering upon or adjacent to said reservation, thereby depreciating and jeopardizing our property and virtually defrauding us of vested rights: Therefore, be it

"Resolved, That we respectfully demand of the Government that such steps be taken at this opportune time as shall effectually dispose of the Indian outbreak subject on the Sioux Reservation, and restore to the citizens the confidence the Government may demand of him.

"Resolved, That the allowing of thousands of savages to be armed to the teeth in the center of a sparsely settled agrarian State is a condition improvident and unreasonable.

"Resolved, That the leaders and instigators of criminality in savages should receive at the hands of the Government the punishment the law provides for traitors, anarchists, and assassins.

"Resolved, That in our judgment the exigencies of the occasion demand nothing short of the complete disarming of the Indian and making it a crime for any person to furnish him with arms or implements of war, and we respectfully suggest that the shortest route to the satisfactory settlement of the question would be to deprive the savages of their horses, substituting therefor oxen trained to the plow.

"F. S. Little,

"W. Rucker,

"E. S. Ricker,

"A. C. Putnam,

"A. Bartow,

"Committee on Resolutions"

Introduction to Documents 6 Through 8

The violence exploded as the year 1890 ended. Military forces that were sent to round up hostile Sioux engaged a band under Chief Big Foot camped at Wounded Knee Creek. Document 6 is an account taken from the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1891. Document 7 is a set of three letters written by military leaders in the field; it is taken from the same congressional report as Document 2. Document 8 is a series of eyewitness reports from Indians who were interviewed by the Office of Indian Affairs. How do the accounts in Documents 6 through 8 differ? Which do you find most believable, and why? Were there white and Indian views?

DOCUMENT 6

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, 1891

THE "MESSIAH CRAZE"

Early in November reports received from the agents at Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Cheyenne River showed that the Indians of those agencies, especially Pine Ridge, were arming themselves and taking a defiant attitude towards the Government and its representatives, committing depredations, and likely to go to other excesses, and November 13 this office recommended that the matter be submitted to the War Department, with request that such prompt action be taken to avert an outbreak as the emergency might be found by them to demand. . . .

November 15 Agent Royer sent to this office the following telegram from Pine Ridge:

Indians are dancing in the snow and are wild and crazy. I have fully informed you that employes and Government property at this agency have no protection and are at the mercy of these dancers. Why delay by further investigation? We need protection and we need it now. The leaders should be arrested and confined in some military post until the matter is quieted, and this should be done at once. . . .

DEATH OF SITTING BULL

In the latter part of November the military authorized the arrest of Sitting Bull by W. F. Cody ("Buffalo Bill"), but at the request of Agent McLaughlin, who deemed it prudent to postpone the arrest until colder weather, the order was canceled by direction of the President.

Sitting Bull's camp where the dancing had been going on was on Grand River 40 miles from the agency. The number of Indian policemen in that vicinity was increased and he was kept under close surveillance. December 12 the commanding officer at Fort Yates was instructed by General Ruger, commanding the Department of Dakota, to make it his special duty to secure the person of Sitting Bull, and to call on Agent McLaughlin "for such coöperation and assistance as would best promote the object in view." December 14 the police notified the agent that Sitting Bull was preparing to leave the reservation. Accordingly, after consultation with the post commander it was decided that the arrest should be made the following morning by the police under command of Lieutenant Bullhead, with United States troops within supporting distance.

At daybreak, December 15, 39 Indian police and 4 volunteers went to Sitting Bull's cabin and arrested him. He agreed to accompany them to the agency, but while dressing caused considerable delay, and during this time his followers began to congregate to the number of 150, so that when he was brought out of the house they had the police entirely surrounded. Sitting Bull then refused to go and called on his friends, the ghost dancers, to rescue him. At this juncture one of them shot Lieutenant Bullhead. The lieutenant then

shot Sitting Bull, who also received another shot and was killed outright. Another shot struck Sergeant Shavehead and then the firing became general. In about two hours the police had secured possession of Sitting Bull's house and driven their assailants into the woods. Shortly after, when the United States troops, under command of Capt. Fechet reached the spot the police drew up in line and saluted. Their bravery and discipline received highest praise from Capt. Fechet. The ghost dancers fled from their hiding places to the Cheyenne River Reservation, leaving their families and dead behind them. Their women who had taken part in the fight had been disarmed by the police and placed under guard and were turned over to the troops when they arrived. The losses were six policemen killed (including Bullhead and Shavehead who soon died at the agency hospital) and one wounded. The attacking party lost eight killed and three wounded. . . .

INDIANS CONCENTRATE IN THE BAD LANDS

Groups of Indians from the different reservations had commenced concentrating in the "bad lands," upon or in the vicinity of the Pine Ridge Reservation. Killing of cattle and destruction of other property by these Indians almost entirely within the limits of Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations occurred, but no signal fires were built, no warlike demonstrations were made, no violence was done to any white settler, nor was there cohesion or organization among the Indians themselves. Many of them were friendly Indians who had never participated in the ghost dance but had fled thither from fear of soldiers, in consequence of the Sitting Bull affair, or through the over persuasion of friends. The military gradually began to close in around them, and they offered no resistance, and a speedy and quiet capitulation of all was confidently expected.

FIGHT AT WOUNDED KNEE CREEK

Among them was Big Foot's band belonging to the Cheyenne River Agency, numbering with others who had joined him, about 120 men and 230 women and children. They had escaped to the bad lands, after arrest by the military at Cheyenne River, but soon started from the bad lands for the Pine Ridge Agency, and with a flag of truce advanced into the open country and proposed a parley with the troops whom they met. This being refused they surrendered unconditionally, remained in camp at Wounded Knee Creek over night, expecting to proceed next morning under escort of the troops to Pine Ridge, whither most of the quondam bad-land Indians were moving. The next day, December 29, when ordered to turn in their arms, they surrendered very few. By a search in the teepees 60 guns were obtained. When the military—a detachment of the Seventh Cavalry (Custer's old command), with other troops—began to take the arms from their persons a shot was fired and carnage ensued. According to reports of military officers, the Indians attacked the troops as soon as the disarmament commenced. The Indians claim that the first shot was fired by a half crazy, irresponsible Indian. At any rate, a short, sharp, indiscriminate fight immediately followed, and, during the fighting and the subsequent flight and pursuit of the Indians, the troops lost 25 killed and 35 wounded, and of the Indians, 84 men and boys, 44 women, and 18 children were killed and at least 33 were wounded, many of them fatally. Most of the

men, including Big Foot, were killed around his tent where he lay sick. The bodies of women and children were scattered along a distance of two miles from the scene of the encounter.

Frightened and exasperated, again the Indians made for the bad lands. Indians en route thence to the agency turned back and others rushed away from Pine Ridge.

DOCUMENT 7

THREE LETTERS BY MILITARY LEADERS

*Camp Pine Ridge Agency
December 31, 1890*

Acting Assistant Adjutant General
*Headquarters Department of the Platte
In the field*

Sir:

I have the honor to report the following in connection with the movements of my command on the night of December 28th and during the following day. Pursuant to verbal orders from the Commanding General of the Department, I moved my command from this point to the crossing of the Wounded Knee by the main trail to the Rosebud Agency, leaving here at 4:40 P.M., and arriving there at about 8:30 P.M. Major Whitside's battalion of the 7th Cavalry and detachment Light Battery E, 1st Artillery, had that day captured Big Foot's band of Indians, and when I arrived had them in his camp. My command, consisting of Regimental Headquarters and the second battalion, detachment of Light Battery E, 1st Artillery, went into camp for the night. At about 7:30 the next morning, after considerable trouble, the bucks of Big Foot's band, numbering 106 were collected away from their camp, and after explaining to them that having surrendered they would be treated as prisoners of war, but that as such they must surrender their arms. Squads of twenty were cut off, and told to bring them to a designated place. The result of this was very unsatisfactory, but few arms being brought. Keeping the bucks collected, details of soldiers were made under officers to search the Indian camp. While this was in progress, one Indian separated a little from the rest, and in ghost dance costumes, began an address, to which I paid no attention, as the interpreter said he was telling the Indians to be quiet and submit. After a short while, however, the interpreter told me that he was talking of wiping out the whites. I then made him cease his address. Just after this, the search through their camp having proved almost fruitless, I gave orders to search the persons of the bucks, again telling them that they must do as white men always do when surrendering, that is, give up their arms.

At the first move to carry out the order last referred to, the bucks made a break, which at once resulted in terrific fire and a hot fight, lasting about twenty minutes, followed by skirmish firing of about one hour. From the first instant the squaws parted for the hills and it is my belief that comparatively few of them were injured. Some bucks succeeded in getting away and three troops were sent in pursuit. They overtook and captured five bucks (all badly wound-



Chief Big Foot lying dead in the snow at Wounded Knee (Smithsonian Institution National Anthropological Archives)

ed), nineteen squaws and children, and killed one buck. Very soon after the force was attacked by about 125 bucks, supposed to be from the agency. In the fight which followed those captured had to be dropped. One of the troops sent out became separated a short distance, and killed four Indians, one a buck, the other three could not be determined. As accurate estimate as could be made of the dead Indians, bucks in and near the camp, was 83, which added to the 7 before mentioned, makes 90 as the number of bucks killed. The attack on the three troops by the 125 bucks, taken in connection with a message from the Department Commander to Major Henry, 9th Cavalry, who was on White River, which message was opened by me by mistake and contained the information that the Brules [a Sioux Band] had left the agency on the warpath, led me to believe that I was in danger of an attack by all the discontented Indians in this vicinity, and as my command had suffered greatly in killed and wounded, I deemed it not only prudent but obligatory in me to return to the agency. . . .

Our loss was one officer (Captain Wallace), six non-commissioned officers and eighteen privates killed, and two officers (Lieuts. Garlington and Gresham, the latter slightly, 7th Cavalry, and Lieut. Hawthorn, 2d Artillery), eleven non-commissioned officers and twenty-two privates wounded. . . .

In closing this report, I desire to express my admiration of the gallant conduct of my command in an engagement with a band of Indians in desperate condition, and crazed by religious fanaticism. . . .

*Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
James W. Forsyth
Colonel 7th Cavalry Commanding*

*Headquarters Division of the Missouri
In the field, Pine Ridge, S.D.
January 21, 1891*

To the Assistant Adjutant General
*Headquarters Division of the Missouri
Pine Ridge, S.D.*

Sir:

I have the honor to report that in obedience to verbal orders of the Division Commander, I proceeded this morning at 7 A.M., under escort of a detachment of the 1st Infantry, mounted, to White Horse Creek, about eleven miles distant, where I found the bodies of one woman, adult, two girls, eight and seven years old, and a boy of about ten years of age.

They were found in the valley of White Horse Creek, in the brush, under a high bluff, where they had evidently been discovered and shot. Each person had been shot once, the character of which was necessarily fatal in each case. The bodies had not been plundered or molested. The shooting was done at so close a range that the person or clothing of each was powder-burned.

The location of the bodies was about three miles westward of the scene of the Wounded Knee battle. All of the bodies were properly buried by the troops of my escort.

From my knowledge of the facts, I am certain that these people were killed on the day of the Wounded Knee fight, and no doubt by the troop of the 7th Cavalry, under command of Captain Godfrey. Tracks of horses shod with the Goodenough shoes were plainly visible and running along the road passing close by where the bodies were found.

A full brother of the dead Indian woman was present. He has been on the agency police force for several years. Considering the distressing circumstances attending the death of his sister, his demeanor was remarkably friendly. His only request was that a family of three persons, the only relatives he has living, and who were of Big Foot's band, may be allowed to remain at this agency. This I recommend be granted.

I returned to the agency at 3 P.M.

*Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
Frank D. Baldwin
Captain 5th Infantry, A.A.I.G.*

*Headquarters Division of the Missouri
Chicago, Illinois, January 31, 1891*

Respectfully forwarded to the Adjutant General of the Army. . . .

Certain features of the affair at Wounded Knee Creek were so unusual and extraordinary, and such injurious reports were current immediately thereafter, so to imperatively demand an investigation in order to ascertain and record as accurately as possible all the facts, so that an intelligent opinion might guide in

the bestowal of commendation or censure. The testimony elicited shows the following facts: First, that Colonel Forsyth had received repeated warnings as to the desperate and deceitful character of Big Foot's band of Indians, and repeated orders as to the exercise of constant vigilance to guard against surprise or disaster under all circumstances.

Secondly, that these warnings and orders were unheeded and disregarded by Colonel Forsyth, who seemed to consider an outbreak of the Indians as being beyond the pale of possibility, in the presence of the large force of troops at hand. The disasters that have occurred to our troops in the past from the desperation of the Indian nature are known to all who are familiar with our history. In addition to this it was well known and Colonel Forsyth had been warned that this particular band contained many of the most desperate and deceitful characters in the Sioux nation, and that a religious excitement nearly approaching frenzy had made them peculiarly dangerous. Under these circumstances the apparent indifference and security of the officer in command of the troops at Wounded Knee Creek is incomprehensive and inexcusable.

Thirdly. An examination of the accompanying map and testimony shows conclusively that at the beginning of the outbreak not a single company of the troops was so disposed as to deliver its fire upon the warriors without endangering the lives of some of their own comrades. It is in fact difficult to conceive how a worse disposition of the troops could have been made. It will be noticed that it would have been perfectly practicable for the entire command of upwards of four hundred and fifty men to have been placed between the warriors and the women and children, with their backs toward the latter and their faces toward the warriors, where they might have used their weapons effectively if required. The testimony goes to show that most of the troops were forced to withhold their fire, leaving the brunt of the affair to fall upon two companies until such warriors as had not been killed broke through or overpowered the small force directly about them and reached the camp occupied by their women and children. The battery of four Hotchkiss guns had until then been useless, the friction primers having been removed from the guns by order of the Captain commanding the battery, lest the gunners might in their excitement discharge the pieces and destroy their own comrades. These guns were now opened upon the Indian camp, even at that time placing in peril Troops C and D, 7th Cav., which were obliged to retreat for some distance owing to the fire from these guns and from the small arms of other portions of the command. The fact that a large number of the one hundred and six warriors were without fire arms when the outbreak occurred is shown by the evidence that forty-eight guns had been taken from the tepees and that a personal search of twenty or more warriors resulted in finding them unarmed. This fact taken in connection with the extremely injudicious disposition of the troops, and the large number of casualties among them, constrains the belief that some of these casualties were suffered at the hands of our own men. The fatal disposition of the troops was such as at the outset to counteract in great measure the immense disparity of strength, and would have been inexcusable in the face of an armed and desperate foe, even had no special warnings and orders been received from higher authority. I can only partially account for the singular apathy and neglect of Col. Forsyth upon the theory of his indifference to and contempt for the repeated and urgent warnings and orders received by him from the Division Commander, or by his incompetence, and entire inexperience in the responsibility of exercising command where judgment and discretion are required.

I also forward herewith the report of Captain Frank D. Baldwin, 5th Infy., concerning the finding of the bodies of a party of women and children about three miles from the scene of the engagement of Wounded Knee Creek. This report indicates the nature of some of the results of that unfortunate affair, results which are viewed with the strongest disapproval by the undersigned.

Nelson A. Miles

DOCUMENT 8

EYEWITNESS REPORTS OF INDIANS INTERVIEWED BY THE OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Turning Hawk, Pine Ridge (Mr. Cook, interpreter). Mr. Commissioner, my purpose to-day is to tell you what I know of the condition of affairs at the agency where I live. A certain falsehood [the ghost dance religion] came to our agency from the west which had the effect of a fire upon the Indians, and when this certain fire came upon our people those who had farsightedness and could see into the matter made up their minds to stand up against it and fight it. The reason we took this hostile attitude to this fire was because we believed that you yourself would not be in favor of this particular mischief-making thing; but just as we expected, the people in authority did not like this thing and we were quietly told that we must give up or have nothing to do with this certain movement. Though this is the advice from our good friends in the east, there were, of course, many silly young men who were longing to become identified with the movement, although they knew that there was nothing absolutely bad, nor did they know there was anything absolutely good, in connection with the movement.

In the course of time we heard that the soldiers were moving toward the scene of trouble. After awhile some of the soldiers finally reached our place and we heard that a number of them also reached our friends at Rosebud. Of course, when a large body of soldiers is moving toward a certain direction they inspire a more or less amount of awe, and it is natural that the women and children who see this large moving mass are made afraid of it and be put in a condition to make them run away. At first we thought that Pine Ridge and Rosebud were the only two agencies where soldiers were sent, but finally we heard that the other agencies fared likewise. We heard and saw that about half our friends at Rosebud agency, from fear at seeing the soldiers, began the move of running away from their agency toward ours (Pine Ridge), and when they had gotten inside of our reservation they there learned that right ahead of them at our agency was another large crowd of soldiers, and while the soldiers were there, there was constantly a great deal of false rumor flying back and forth. The special rumor I have in mind is the threat that the soldiers had come there to disarm the Indians entirely and to take away all their horses from them. That was the oft-repeated story. . . .

They were met by the soldiers and surrounded and finally taken to the Wounded Knee creek, and there at a given time their guns were demanded. When they had delivered them up, the men were separated from their families, from their tipis, and taken to a certain spot. When the guns were thus

taken and the men thus separated, there was a crazy man, a young man of very bad influence and in fact a nobody, among that bunch of Indians fired his gun, and of course the firing of a gun must have been the breaking of a military rule of some sort, because immediately the soldiers returned fire and indiscriminate killing followed.

Spotted Horse. This man shot an officer in the army; the first shot killed this officer. I was a voluntary scout at that encounter and I saw exactly what was done, and that was what I noticed; that the first shot killed an officer. As soon as this shot was fired the Indians immediately began drawing their knives, and they were exhorted from all sides to desist, but this was not obeyed. Consequently the firing began immediately on the part of the soldiers.

Turning Hawk. All the men who were in a bunch were killed right there, and those who escaped that first fire got into the ravine, and as they went along up the ravine for a long distance they were pursued on both sides by the soldiers and shot down, as the dead bodies showed afterwards. The women were standing off at a different place from where the men were stationed, and when the firing began, those of the men who escaped the first onslaught went in one direction up the ravine, and then the women, who were bunched together at another place, went entirely in a different direction through an open field, and the women fared the same fate as the men who went up the deep ravine.

American Horse. The men were separated, as has already been said, from the women, and they were surrounded by the soldiers. Then came next the village of the Indians and that was entirely surrounded by the soldiers also. When the firing began, of course the people who were standing immediately around the young man who fired the first shot were killed right together, and then they turned their guns, Hotchkiss guns, etc., upon the women who were in the lodges standing there under a flag of truce, and of course as soon as they were fired upon they fled, the men fleeing in one direction and the women running in two different directions. So that there were three general directions in which they took flight.

There was a woman with an infant in her arms who was killed as she almost touched the flag of truce, and the women and children of course were strewn all along the circular village until they were dispatched. Right near the flag of truce a mother was shot down with her infant; the child not knowing that its mother was dead was still nursing, and that especially was a very sad sight. The women as they were fleeing with their babes were killed together, shot right through, and the women who were very heavy with child were also killed. All the Indians fled in these three directions, and after most all of them had been killed a cry was made that all those who were not killed or wounded should come forth and they would be safe. Little boys who were not wounded came out of their places of refuge, and as soon as they came in sight a number of soldiers surrounded them and butchered them there.

Of course we all feel very sad about this affair. I stood very loyal to the government all through those troublesome days, and believing so much in the government and being so loyal to it, my disappointment was very strong, and I have come to Washington with a very great blame on my heart. Of course it would have been all right if only the men were killed; we would feel almost grateful for it. But the fact of the killing of the women, and more especially the killing of the young boys and girls who are to go to make up the future strength of the Indian people, is the saddest part of the whole affair and we feel it very sorely.

I was not there at the time before the burial of the bodies, but I did go there with some of the police and the Indian doctor and a great many of the people, men from the agency, and we went through the battlefield and saw where the bodies were from the track of the blood. . . .

Introduction to Document 9

The following two reports try to assess what happened at Wounded Knee Creek and why Dr. V. T. McGillicuddy had been the agent at the Pine Ridge reservation but had left months before the bloodshed. He wrote his report two weeks after the incident as a letter to General L. W. Colby. General Nelson A. Miles was in charge of the overall military operation on the plains. His report was printed in the Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1891. How do the two reports agree or disagree on what happened and why?

DOCUMENT 9

GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY STATEMENTS ON WOUNDED KNEE

EX-AGENT MCGILLYCUDDY'S STATEMENT

Sir:

In answer to your inquiry of a recent date, I would state that in my opinion to no one cause can be attributed the recent so-called outbreak on the part of the Sioux, but rather to a combination of causes gradually cumulative in their effect and dating back through many years—in fact to the inauguration of our practically demonstrated faulty Indian policy.

There can be no question but that many of the treaties, agreements, or solemn promises made by our government with these Indians have been broken. Many of them have been kept by us technically, but as far as the Indian is concerned have been misunderstood by him through a lack of proper explanation at time of signing, and hence considered by him as broken.

It must also be remembered that in all of the treaties made by the government with the Indians, a large portion of them have not agreed to or signed the same. Noticeably was this so in the agreement secured by us with them the summer before last, by which we secured one-half of the remainder of the Sioux reserve, amounting to about 16,000 square miles. This agreement barely carried with the Sioux nation as a whole, but did not carry at Pine Ridge or Rosebud, where the strong majority were against it; and it must be noted that wherever there was the strongest opposition manifested to the recent treaty, there, during the present trouble, have been found the elements opposed to the government.

The Sioux nation, which at one time, with the confederated bands of Cheyennes and Araphahos, controlled a region of country bounded on the

north by the Yellowstone, on the south by the Arkansas, and reaching from the Missouri river to the Rocky mountains, has seen this large domain, under the various treaties, dwindle down to their now limited reserve of less than 16,000 square miles, and with the land has disappeared the buffalo and other game. The memory of this, chargeable by them to the white man, necessarily irritates them.

There is back of all this the natural race antagonism which our dealings with the aborigine in connection with the inevitable onward march of civilization has in no degree lessened. It has been our experience, and the experience of other nations, that defeat in war is soon, not sooner or later, forgotten by the coming generation, and as a result we have a tendency to a constant recurrence of outbreak on the part of the weaker race. It is now sixteen years since our last war with the Sioux in 1876—a time when our present Sioux warriors were mostly children, and therefore have no memory of having felt the power of the government. It is but natural that these young warriors, lacking in experience, should require but little incentive to induce them to test the bravery of the white man on the war path, where the traditions of his people teach him is the only path to glory and a chosen seat in the "happy hunting grounds." For these reasons every precaution should be adopted by the government to guard against trouble with its disastrous results. Have such precautions been adopted? Investigation of the present trouble does not so indicate.

Sitting Bull and other irreconcilable relics of the campaign of 1876 were allowed to remain among their people and foment discord. The staple article of food at Pine Ridge and some of the other agencies had been cut down below the subsisting point, noticeably the beef at Pine Ridge, which from an annual treaty allowance of 6,250,000 pounds gross was cut down to 4,000,000 pounds. The contract on that beef was violated . . . so that the Indians did not actually receive half ration of this food in winter—the very time the largest allowance of food is required. By the fortunes of political war, weak agents were placed in charge of some of the agencies at the very time that trouble was known to be brewing. Noticeably was this so at Pine Ridge, where a notoriously weak and unfit man was placed in charge. His flight, abandonment of his agency, and his call for troops have, with the horrible results of the same, become facts in history.

Now, as for facts in connection with Pine Ridge, which agency has unfortunately become the theater of the present "war," was there necessity for troops? My past experience with those Indians does not so indicate. For seven long years, from 1879 to 1886, I, as agent, managed this agency without the presence of a soldier on the reservation, and none nearer than 60 miles, and in those times the Indians were naturally much wilder than they are to-day. To be sure, during the seven years we occasionally had exciting times, when the only thing lacking to cause an outbreak was the calling for troops by the agent and the presence of the same. As a matter of fact, however, no matter how much disturbed affairs were, no matter how imminent an outbreak, the progressive chiefs, with their following, came to the front enough in the majority, with the fifty Indian policemen, to at once crush out all attempts at rebellion against the authority of the agent and the government.

Why was this? Because in those times we believed in placing confidence in the Indians; in establishing, as far as possible, a home-rule government on the reservation. We established local courts, presided over by the Indians, with Indian juries; in fact, we believed in having the Indians assist in working out

their own salvation. We courted and secured the friendship and support of the progressive and orderly element, as against the mob element. Whether the system thus inaugurated was practicable, was successful, comparison with recent events will decide. . . .

As for the ghost dance, too much attention has been paid to it. It was only the symptom or surface indication of deep-rooted, long-existing difficulty: as well treat the eruption of smallpox as the disease and ignore the constitutional disease.

As regards disarming the Sioux, however desirable it may appear, I consider it neither advisable nor practicable. I fear that it will result as the theoretical enforcement of prohibition in Kansas, Iowa, and Dakota; you will succeed in disarming the friendly Indians, because you can, and you will not so succeed with the mob element, because you can not. If I were again to be an Indian agent and had my choice, I would take charge of 10,000 armed Sioux in preference to a like number of disarmed ones: and, furthermore, agree to handle that number, or the whole Sioux nation, without a white soldier.

Respectfully, etc.
V. T. McGillicuddy

P.S.—I neglected to state that up to date there has been neither a Sioux outbreak nor war. No citizen in Nebraska or Dakota has been killed, molested, or can show the scratch of a pin, and no property has been destroyed off the reservation.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL MILES

Cause of Indian dissatisfaction. The causes that led to the serious disturbance of the peace in the northwest last autumn and winter were so remarkable that an explanation of them is necessary in order to comprehend the seriousness of the situation. The Indians assuming the most threatening attitude of hostility were the Cheyennes and Sioux. . . .

The fact that they had not received sufficient food is admitted by the agents and the officers of the government who have had opportunities of knowing. The majority of the Sioux were under the charge of civil agents, frequently changed and often inexperienced. Many of the tribes became rearmed and remounted. They claimed that the government had not fulfilled its treaties and had failed to make large enough appropriations for their support; that they had suffered for want of food, and the evidence of this is beyond question and sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced intelligent mind. . . .

The unfortunate failure of the crops in the plains country during the years of 1889 and 1890 added to the distress and suffering of the Indians, and it was possible for them to raise but very little from the ground for self-support; in fact, white settlers have been most unfortunate, and their losses have been serious and universal throughout a large section of that country. . . .

The commanding officer at Fort Yates, North Dakota, under date of December 7, 1890, at the time the Messiah delusion was approaching a climax, says, in reference to the disaffection of the Sioux Indians at Standing Rock agency, that it is due to the following causes:

1. Failure of the government to establish an equitable southern boundary of the Standing Rock agency reservation.

2. Failure of the government to expend a just proportion of the money received from the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad company, for right of way privileges, for the benefit of the Indians of said agency. Official notice was received October 18, 1881, by the Indian agent at the Standing Rock agency, that the said railroad company had paid the government under its agreement with the Sioux Indians, for right of way privileges, the sum of \$13,911. . . . No portion of the money had been expended up to that time (December, 1890) for the benefit of the Indians of the agency, and frequent complaints had been made to the agent by the Indians because they had received no benefits from their concessions to the said railroad companies.
3. Failure of the government to issue the certificates of title to allotments, as required by article 6 of the treaty of 1868.
4. Failure of the government to provide the full allowance of seeds and agricultural implements to Indians engaged in farming, as required in article 8, treaty of 1868.
5. Failure of the government to issue to such Indians the full number of cows and oxen provided in article 10, treaty of 1876.
6. Failure of the government to issue to the Indians the full ration stipulated in article 5, treaty of 1876. (For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1890, the following shortages in the rations were found to exist: 485,275 pounds of beef [gross], 761,212 pounds of corn, 11,937 pounds of coffee, 281,712 pounds of flour, 26,234 pounds of sugar, and 39,852 pounds of beans) . . .
7. Failure of the government to issue to the Indians the full amount of annuity supplies to which they were entitled under the provisions of article 10, treaty of 1868.
8. Failure of the government to have the clothing and other annuity supplies ready for issue on the first day of August of each year. Such supplies have not been ready for issue to the Indians, as a rule, until the winter season is well advanced. . . . Such supplies for the present fiscal year, beginning July 1, 1890, had not yet reached (December, 1890) the nearest railway station, about 60 miles distant, from which point they must, at this season of the year, be freighted to this agency in wagons. It is now certain that the winter will be well advanced before the Indians at this agency receive their annual allowance of clothing and other annuity supplies)
9. Failure of the government to appropriate money for the payment of the Indians for the ponies taken from them, by the authority of the government, in 1876.

In conclusion, the commanding officer says: "It, however, appears from the foregoing, that the government has failed to fulfill its obligations, and in order to render the Indians law-abiding, peaceful, contented, and prosperous it is strongly recommended that the treaties be promptly and fully carried out, and that the promises made by the commission in 1889 be faithfully kept."

Postscript

Ten days before the bloodletting at Wounded Knee, an editorial appeared in the *Aberdeen, South Dakota, Pioneer*. The author declared that Sitting Bull's death

marked the final passing of the "proud spirit" of these "wild" and "untamed" people. The best thing for whites to do now was to exterminate the remaining thousands:

"The nobility of the Redskin is extinguished, and what few are left are a pack of whining curs who lick the hand that smites them. The Whites, by law of conquest, by justice of civilization, are masters of the American continent, and the best safety of the frontier settlements will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians. Why not annihilation? Their glory has fled, their spirit broken, their manhood effaced; better that they should die than live the miserable wretches that they are. History would forget these latter despicable beings, and speak, in latter ages of the glory of these grand Kings of the forest and plain."

The author's belief in the Indians' nobility was no bar to his calling for their elimination. Rather, by romanticizing their past, he was able to condemn them in the present. Two weeks after the above editorial appeared, just four days after Wounded Knee, the editor concluded: "Having wronged them for centuries we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth. . . . Otherwise, we may expect future years to be as full of trouble with the redskins as those have been in the past." The author of these editorials was L. Frank Baum, who in 1900 became famous for writing *The Wizard of Oz*.

Probing the Sources

1. Describe the "Messiah Craze" and the Ghost Dance.
2. What evidence is there that the Sioux were armed and preparing to attack? Do you think that they were purely victims?
3. Give a sense of the range of feelings that agents, military officials, and government employees felt toward the Sioux.

Critical Thinking

1. Why do you think so many Indians became interested in the Ghost Dance?
2. How did various whites react to the new religion? Many whites feared that the new religion was a cover for a Sioux uprising. What do you think?
3. Recount the story of Wounded Knee. Is the story an ambiguous one? Which circumstances, causes, or individuals do you think were most responsible for the tragedy?
4. Could Wounded Knee have been avoided? How?
5. How do you think whites and Native Americans differed in their ideas about progress?
6. Can you identify messianic movements among Euro-Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?
7. Was Wounded Knee a battle or a massacre?

Bibliography

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