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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT CHEMAWA

By JAMES T. RYAN, Superintendent

The policy of the Office of Indian Affairs which has resulted in changing the large boarding schools to vocational schools is destined to have far-reaching effects in eliminating the vicious circle of education only to have the children return to the old mode of life. The status of the Indian child when he graduates from public school is quite different from that of his white brother who relies on employed parents, friends, and relatives to help him secure employment. The white child also has the advantage of opportunity in many low skilled "white collar" jobs, such as "soda slinger" and "bell hop," to which the Indian youth has not as yet been generally accepted. The Indian child lacking these fundamental requirements for placement has found it impossible to secure steady employment except when he had acquired skill in some trade. This trade education has been the only stepping stone from reservation to non-reservation employment for all but a very few so well-endowed with ambition and personality that success for them was practically inevitable.

Chemawa, which is to some extent typical of the larger Indian Vocational Schools, trains children in some thirty trades or vocations. It places its prospective graduates in temporary employment as a means to breaking down barriers and of detecting deficiencies. The school then secures permanent employment for its vocational graduate. Those who do not graduate in a vocation it is, of course, almost impossible to place.

The Indian Office should also find gratification in the improved spirit and attitude of the vocational boarding school graduates. They are striving hard; their academic attainment is advancing with the brighter outlook for their future. That the younger students not ready for vocational education can profit best by education in a public school where they can come into contact with a normal cross section of the school pop-



Supt. Ryan

ulation is not to be questioned, and if it were possible to place the sixteen year old boy or girl in a city trade school better results might be obtained. However, there is some doubt in this respect for few of the city trade schools offer the number of vocational subjects possible in the Indian Vocational High School. Also the cost of enrollment in city vocational schools would be prohibitive if board, room and guidance were added to the tuition.

The work at Chemawa is practical and our placement so far has demonstrated that children are well-trained. The boys learning cooking cannot be satisfactorily taught on huge steam cookers such as are required for the students' dining hall, consequently the "Altamot Restaurant" has been established as an adjunct to the kitchen and here boys are taught restaurant cooking in all its ramifications. The girls, in learning housework, are likewise given practical experience. After completing the home economics course they enter the practice house for intensive housekeeping experience and on completion of that are put in homes about the grounds where they secure actual practice under normal working conditions. The employers in Salem are likewise cooperating with the school by offering short time training in industry and in supplying the school with a record of each individual's capacities. Students who have entered on training in Salem have done so well that Chemawa feels justified in believing that its education is practical and that it is properly fitting boys and girls for employment.

JOHN COLLIER, COMMISSIONER

The following item from the *Christian Science Monitor* concerns a topic of great interest in the Indian Service right at this time:

The nomination of Mr. John Collier of California to be commissioner of Indian affairs was confirmed yesterday by the Senate.

Mr. Collier came into Indian work in 1920 when he left a position with the California Board of Education to study community organization of the Pueblos. He spent a year with these Indians. In 1922 he gave up all other work in an effort to bring about a reform of the Government's method of handling the Indians. He served without salary as a research specialist for the General Federation of Women's Clubs for a period, and in 1923, was selected as executive secretary of the Indian Defense Association.