

We are in the World War

By HON. JOHN COLLIER, Commissioner
of Indian Affairs

THE stake is everything—literally everything—that we as Americans (white and Indian) hold dear. The World War is invisible; we irrevocably have been sucked into its vortex. It is the most desperate war—not merely the hugest, but the most ruthless and desperate—that our planet has known. No thought or imagination has been informed enough or strong enough to anticipate the ruthlessness, the desperation, the all-penetrating nature of this World War. On its outcome depends not merely the future of republics and empires, not merely the physical shape of a thousand years to come, but the actual biological survival of whole races. But something far more terrible depends on the outcome. It is whether the human spirit shall remain alive—whether the spirit and heart of mankind shall go on with much beauty and tender power, growing slowly to a more all-sufficing beauty and tenderness, or shall become a thing and a force of horror. Whether the breath of god shall blow on the waters of human life, as in ages gone and until now has blown, or through the hardness of man's own malignly organized will, shall blow on the waters of life no more.

It is going to be a long war. It can have no indecisive ending. What we love will go down for a long age, or its enemy will go down for a long age.

A long war, requiring of us more than any of us as yet can foresee. Unless we give that more which will be required, all that we live by and care for will be sunk.

In what spirit shall we—Indian and white Americans—do what has to be done, endure what has to be endured? Let it be the spirit which awakens when we think deeply and long about what it is that makes us men; what it is that Christs and Platos lived and died to give men; what it is that we are the keepers of, the messengers, carrying it on to boundless future time. Loveliness and greatness are our heritage, we will save them now for future man, and fighting to save them, we will not be changed by what we have to do into the image of their fearful antagonist. Not like the Japanese in their homeland or in horror-ridden China, not like the Nazis in their homeland or in tortured, dying Poland or Greece. Not like these shall we become through what we have to do. The increase of the good spirit within us, through the very agony of the struggle, now upon us, to save it for the world, is possible. Let us accomplish that result, and not only our country but the soul within us will have its victory.—Indians at Work.

