



Facets of LIFE

BY DR. CHARLES A. TONSOR

A Man Whom Historians Have Ignored

Early this year the press and the video were presenting in lurid fashion the goings on at Wounded Knee, but they gave no perspective of the situation.

Wounded Knee is a small village, one of many small settlements in the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwestern South Dakota. This reservation consists of nearly 5,000 square miles. Many roads are mere trails and the country is as wild as it was in the days of long ago. But during the situation that arose at Wounded Knee none of the reports gave us any idea of what the real situation was. A

small group of dissidents who had become fed up with what the Indians had to put up with decided to use the technique which had gained much from the politicians for the blacks.

The region is rough, desolate, the landscape is as it was in the beginning. If it had been otherwise it would not have been given to the Indians. Only the Indians deep feeling for the land keeps them in a place so lonely. They cling to Grandmother Earth and this portion of earth is the only part that they can call their own. All the rest was taken away from them.

Today the Indian population is increasing more rapidly than any other minority group. With this and the growing pride in being an Indian comes increased dissatisfaction in the way they are being treated. The result is organization both in cities where Indians live and on the reservation.

Our historians have told us about Renne Marquette and Father Joges and their work with the Indians but they have told us little about a man who did much to help the Indians and strove to bring peace between warring tribes and the Federal government. This man was a Jesuit as were Marquette and Joges. HIS NAME IS *ierre* Jean DeSmet. He was born in Belgium on January 30, 1801, in Termonde; but unlike Marquette and Joges, did not become a Jesuit until he had come to America 20 years later and studied until 1827 when he became a Jesuit.

He began his work among the Indians in the late 1830's and became so respected by them that in 1839 and again in 1840 he brought about peace between the warlike Sioux and the peaceful Potawatomes. Then he worked among the Blackfeet for three

years and finally brought about peace with them. His reputation among the Indians as a man of peace was thus established.

But settlers were pressing on to the west over the Oregon trail. This brought about great resentment among the Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Sioux and others. The Federal government having noted the work of Father DeSmet decided to get him to work with the Indians to prevent attacks on the caravan. He arranged for a meeting between the Indians and the Federal representatives in Fort Laramie on the Platte River. Here a treaty of peace was signed between the Indians and the Federal government September 17, 1851.

Again when James Buchanan was president, de Smet in May 1858 was asked to become chaplain and attempt to bring about peace between the Federal government and the Mormons who were in rebellion against the government in Washington. He accepted the assignment and used it as the occasion to work upon the Indian tribes of Utah. The Mormons, however, submitted to Washington before De Smet had no more than begun his work.

This out of the way, he contemplated a time of rest but General William S. Harney who had recommended to Buchanan that deSmet be used to settle the Mormon situation, urged him to come with him and settle the war with the Indians in Oregon. The priest accepted the invitation. He was able to win over Skloom and Kamiakin, the Indian Yakoma tribes of the Northwest. Thus he had accomplished peace with the Indians on both sides of the Rockies.

The peace, however, was of short duration for the Indians took advantage of the government's engagement in the War between the states. This brought deSmet into action once more. He was called to Washington by President Abraham Lincoln on September 17, 1862, who had been advised to do so by Generals who had operated in the west and northwest. He took advantage of a conference with the president to inform him that our treatment of the Indians had been shabby, that

the treaty which had settled the matter of conflict on the Oregon Trail had been and was still being violated by Americans. He stubbornly refused to act until he had secured what he wanted for the Indians and eventually Lincoln agreed. But his stubbornness led Lincoln to say to his advisors: "Don't send any more Jesuit priests up here. I've always been better able to handle horses than mules."

When the Blackfeet, Cheyennes and the Sioux united, Washington appointed de Smet special commissioner with rank of Major in the United States Army and in 1867 he succeeded tolerably well in securing peace. In 1868 he was appointed official emissary to present terms of peace to the Sioux. At the great council that worked out the Treaty of Fort Ruc, de Smet worked with Sitting Bull, leader of the Sioux, which made the treaty possible. And while carrying on this work, he had made eight trips to Europe to publicize the needs of the Indians.

Have you read any thing about this in your histories?

Ferry Good Boat Now For Sale

Want to own your own ferryboat? For the first time in four years, New York City will be selling an obsolete ferryboat, Municipal Service Administrator John T. Carroll announced today.

"The boat, The Gold Star Mother, will be sold as is to the highest bidder," Administrator Carroll said today. "Bids will be accepted until the scheduled opening time, 11 A.M. Thursday, Feb. 21."

The "as is," he added, refers to the fact that the boat's superstructure and machinery have been cannibalized for parts needed to keep other ferries in operation. Although afloat, the buyer must agree to tow it away from its berth at pier 7 at the foot of Hannah Street, Staten Island.

The sale will be handled by the Salvage Division of the Department of Purchase.

Purchase Commissioner Robert I. Cohen said the 2,126-ton ferry was built in 1937 at Mariners Harbor, Staten Island, and was last drydocked in November, 1969. It saw service running between Manhattan and Staten Island.

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