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Pith Helmet Corner: An Occasional Column on Ephemera Related to the History of Anthropology

Robert Gordon
supported its use as a sacrament. La Flesche was Omaha and an anthropologist who was
elected in 1912 as Vice-president of the American Anthropological Association (Hoxie
2001:180). Like Eastman and Zitkala-Sa, La Flesche was a member of the SAI at the time of
the peyote hearings, but the three disagreed. According to La Flesche, the use of peyote was
part of a new accommodating religion that helped Indians to avoid liquor and uplifted the
race. La Flesche argued, “the Indians who have taken the new religion strive to live upright,
moral lives, and I think their morality can be favorably compared with that of any
community of a like number in this country.” (PH 1918:114).

At first blush, the arguments for and against the use of peyote may seem like a
dizzying array of contradictory statements and rhetorical jockeying. Upon closer inspection,
one can identify the logic that bolstered each participant’s political position. Several issues
came up repeatedly: regional specificity, gender, the ghost-dance, ethnology, civilization, sex,
and morality. Each participant in these hearings had his or her own history and political
commitments born out of, and in response to, the assimilation policies promulgated by state
and federal governments. The peyote hearings demonstrate that the history of anthropology
is a discourse that is inextricable from American-Indian intellectual history as well as the
history of progressive-era reformers.

NOTES
1. U. S. Congress. House Committee on Indian Affairs. 1918. Peyote Hearings Before a
Subcommittee of the Committee on Indian Affairs of the House of Representatives on H.R.
2614 to Amend Sections 2139 and 2140 of the Revised Statutes and the Acts Amendatory
Hereafter cited as PH.

References Cited:
Hoxie, Frederick E. 2001. Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive


Staff writer. 1918. “Indian Woman in Capital to Fight Growing Use of Peyote Drug by

PITH HELMET CORNER: AN OCCASIONAL COLUMN ON EPHEMERA
RELATED TO THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY
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One of the unintended consequences of anthropology has been the way it has
stimulated the creativity of a wide variety of poets ranging from established ones like W. H.
Auden to lowly villagers. Not only are they sometimes amusing and entertaining, but they
also offer insight into relationships between anthropologists and the wider community.

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While occasionally anthropologists will be satirized in novels such as David Lodge's *Paradise News* and David Parkin's *Krippendorf's Tribe*, the use of doggerel to try to make satirical statements about anthropology has a longer history. Properly contextualized, such statements provide important clues about how anthropologists were perceived.

Anthropologists have also used this medium. Perhaps the best, indeed classic, example is the late Peter Lawrence, Professor of Social Anthropology at Sydney University and author of *Road Belong Cargo*, who composed an epic poem, *Don Juan in Melanesia*, a 64 stanza 'rubbishing' of ahistoricism which was originally published in an Australian literary magazine, *Quadrant*, and later republished in book form with illustrations and introduction by James McAuley by Queensland University Press. Should there be sufficient reader interest we will try to get rights to republish this forgotten classic.

Offered here are a some doggerel collected over the years with the plea that if any readers know of other examples of historical doggerel they please submit them to HAN. My own collection is restricted to examples from Africa and Oceania. Are examples of such doggerel found in other geographic areas or is it a form of social commentary restricted to areas where a large number of "settlers" or "expatriates" are found?

**Radcliffe-Brown**

To be sung to the tune of *Burlington Bertie*

My name’s Radcliffe-Brown  
I’m the talk of the town  
And I know all about ancient tools  
I’ve been to Malaya  
I’ve met Todalaya  
And I can tell morons from fools.  
My smile is sardonic  
My brushback is chronic  
The ladies all think that my voice is harmonie.  
I’m Rad, Rad, I’ve gone to the bad  
All monogamous tribes I’ll abhor  
I’ve ten wives in Tonga  
Had I been there longer  
I might have had twenty five more.

(Source: Ken Maddock, "Songs of Famous Men," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 3 (1990):19-21. Maddock collected the song from Mary Patterson, who in turn was given it by Ian Hogbin, one of Radcliffe-Brown’s students in Sydney).

**Anthropophagology**

In lovely Hawaii, where the sea and the sky  
(And the girls) are attractive and kind,  
A coterie small, anthropologists all,  
Assembled to talk themselves blind.  
“Though the world may deride,” one orator cried,  
“And scientists gurgle with mirth,
Yet at last here we are in our own Seminar
And WE KNOW we’re the salt of the earth.”

The others applauded. Reporters recorded
The speech and were hungry for more.
But they waited in vain; no one spouted again,
So they all went to sleep on the floor.
And the president said, as he scratched his bald head
And removed a sea-slug from his ear,
“The meeting’s a wow! It’s all clear to me now.
We’re the salt of the Ocean. Hear, hear!”

Still the conference sat, and its members grew up
And took all the pleasure they could.
They had lobsters for tea; and between you and me
They ate very much more than they should.
They lay on the beach with a girl side by side
And they dallied and dithered and dozed
Till young Clarence one morning, without a warning,
Spoke thus e’er the conference closed:

“As regards education, the nativization
Of civilised custom must hold,
Native culture must live; nor must cannibals give
Up their habits because they are told.
Let the head-hunters thrive, and their customs survive
As the basis of solid advance.
I’m all for sensation; and civilisation.
Don’t give our great science a chance.”

They gave him a cheer and they bought him a beer,
And they put him to bed on the beach
With his head in the sand and some Aspirin in hand
And a large block of ice within reach.
When they waked him at dawn he sat up with a yawn
And reached for the pants by his bed.
But they shouted, “Go slow! You are nativized now!”
And they gave him a sulu instead.

They dressed him in that and a panama hat
And a pair of tan shoes for his feet.
And they shipped him “with care” on a second class fare
To Papua’s peaceful retreat.
As he sat in his camp in a pestilent swamp
Some two hundred miles up the Fly,
In deep meditation on nativization,
A cannibal party came by.
Young Clarence cried "Halt! If you've pepper and salt
And some dishes and cutlery too,
I'll show you the way to eat man. And I'd say
I know far more about it than you."
So he started a class, the fatuous ass,
Good manners with custom combining,
And recited the rules to those cannibal ghouls
Till he'd taught them the whole art of dining.

"Now A is for appetite. B is for belch (please
don't do it so close in my ear).
And C for the corpse, and D for the dish,
And E for the strict etiquette that I wish
To instill into ev'ry one here.

"F is for fingers, but also for fork; G the gravy
you drink without noise.
H for the habits I teach ev'ry day,
I for the innards the cook throws away,
And J for the joint's juicy joys.

"K is the knuckle-bone, nutty to gnaw; L for
liver, and M is for meat.
And N for the napkin you always should use
And O for the orgies I'll never refuse;
P for the pain if you once over-eat."

So, the alphabet through, he instructed his crew
Of crude but ambitious man-eaters
Till they'd learned such a lot they neglected the pot
And grew thin as the hungry mosquitors.
Then the chief took a stand with a club in his hand
Facing poor little Clarence. "The fact is,
I've a concept," said he. "It's a new one to me,
And I'm going to put it in practice.

"Now A is for anger as well as for art; and B
is for brain soft and sweet.
And C is for club and for cranium, too,
And D's for a dinner with which we could do,
And E is for esculent; that must mean you -
And we're all wanting something to eat."

The speaker stopped there; but his murderous stare
Caused Clarence to gasp and to shiver.
Then he shouted, "My hat! You must never do that!"
And he flung himself into the river.
As he swam with the stream he awoke from his dream
To the facts of his own situation;
And he cried: “I for one have quite finally done
With the concept of nativization.”

(Source: Pacific Islands Monthly September 18, 1937: 64. The song was “inspired by certain aspects of the report of the conference on Native Education held last year in Honolulu.”) Could the author be Felix Keesing, W. C. Groves, or F. E. Williams?

(to be sung to the tune of British Grenadiers)

*Con brio Americano, prejudissimo, Unescismo*
Some talk of race relations, and some of politics,
Of labour and migrations, of his’ry, lice and ticks,
Investments, trends of amity
And patterns of behaviour
Let none treat us with levity
For we are out to save ‘yer.

When seated in our library-chairs
We’re filled with righteous thought’tho,
We shoulder continental cares
Tell settlers what we ought to,
We’ll jargonise and analyse
Frustrations and fixations,
Neuroses, angst and stereotypes
In structured integration.

Strange cultures rise from notes and graphs
Through Freud’s and Jung’s perception
Despite your Ego’s dirty laughs
We’ll change you to perfection,
We’ve read Bukharin, Kant and Marx
And even Toynbee’s stories
And our dialectical sparks
Will make explode the Tories.

Rhodesians hear our sage advice
On cross-acculturation,
On inter-racial kinship ties
And folk-way elongation,
On new conceptual frame works high
We’ll bake our cakes of custom,
And with a socializing sigh
We’ll then proceed to bust’em.

Our research tools are sharp and gleam
With verified statistics,
Our intellectual combat team
Has practiced its heuristics
From value judgements we are free,
We only work scientific
For all-round liberty
And Ph.d.s pontific.

(Originally published in the Northern Rhodesian Journal, 1959).

The Marxist-Leninist Song
Sung to the tune of the Major-General's Song from Gilbert and Sullivan's “Pirates of Penzance”

I am the very model of a modern Marxist-Leninist.
I'm anti-war, and anti-God and very anti-feminist;
My thinking's dialectical, my wisdom's undebatable,
When I negate negations they're undoubtedly negatable.
And yet I'm no ascetic - I'm always full of bonhomie
When lecturing to classes on the primitive economy;
And comrades all agree that they have never heard a smarter cuss
Explain the basic reasons for the slave revolt of Spartacus

(Chorus)
Explain the basic reasons, etc.

I'm fierce and unrelenting when I'm extirpating heresies
Yet patient and forgiving to the comrade who his error sees;
In short, as a propagandist, agitator and polemicist
I am the very model of a modern Marxist-Leninist.

(Chorus)
In short, as a propagandist, agitator and polemicist etc.
I am the very model of a modern Marxist-Leninist.

My love of Party history comes very close to mania.
I teem with information on the Bund in Lithuania.
My speech on the Decembrists is replete with fun and pleasantry.
I know the different stages in collectivising peasantry.
With Russian Social-Democrats I'm always glad to clench a fist
(While carefully distinguishing the Bolshevist and Menshevist);
But when I'm confronted with a regular Bukharinite
I get a rise in temperature (both centigrade and Fahrenheit).

(Chorus)
He gets a rise in temperature, etc.

I know what Lenin said about the concept of the deity,
And why it's very dangerous to worship spontaneity.
In short, as a propagandist, agitator and polemicist
I am the very model of a modern Marxist-Leninist.

(Chorus)
In short, as a propagandist, agitator and polemicist
I am the very model of a modern Marxist-Leninist.

In fact when I begin to try to fight against bureaucracy
To criticise myself a bit, and practice more democracy,
And bringing Marx's teachings up to date I'm much more wary at,
And when I've done with phrases like "impoverished proletariat'';
When I've learned that workers think that nothing can be sillier,
Than "monolithic unity" and biased Russophilia -
Then people will exclaim: "Hurrah! He's not a stupid sap at all!
A better Marxist-Leninist has never studied Capital!"

(Chorus)
A better Marxist-Leninist has never studied Capital! etc

My policies and theories have an air of unreality
Because I am a victim of the cult of personality
But still, as propagandist, agitator and polemicist
I am the very model of a modern Marxist-Leninist.

(Chorus)
But still, as propagandist, agitator and polemicist
I am the very model of a modern Marxist-Leninist.

(Recorded by Dan O'Meara at the University of Dar Es Salaam in the early 1970s)

HISTORIES OF THE HUMAN SCIENCES: DIFFERENT DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES
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On May 6, scholars convened at the University of Pennsylvania to attend the day-long conference, "Histories of the Human Sciences: Different Disciplinary Perspectives." Conference organizer Henrika Kuklick began the day by welcoming participants and thanking the Department of the History and Sociology of Science for sponsoring the event. The conference brought together historians and practicing social scientists united by their interest in the history of the human sciences. Three paper sessions and a final roundtable provoked ample and stimulating discussion, and pointed to new directions in the field.

The conference’s first session assembled practitioners of psychology, economics and anthropology. University of Illinois anthropologist Matti Bunzl provided an excellent