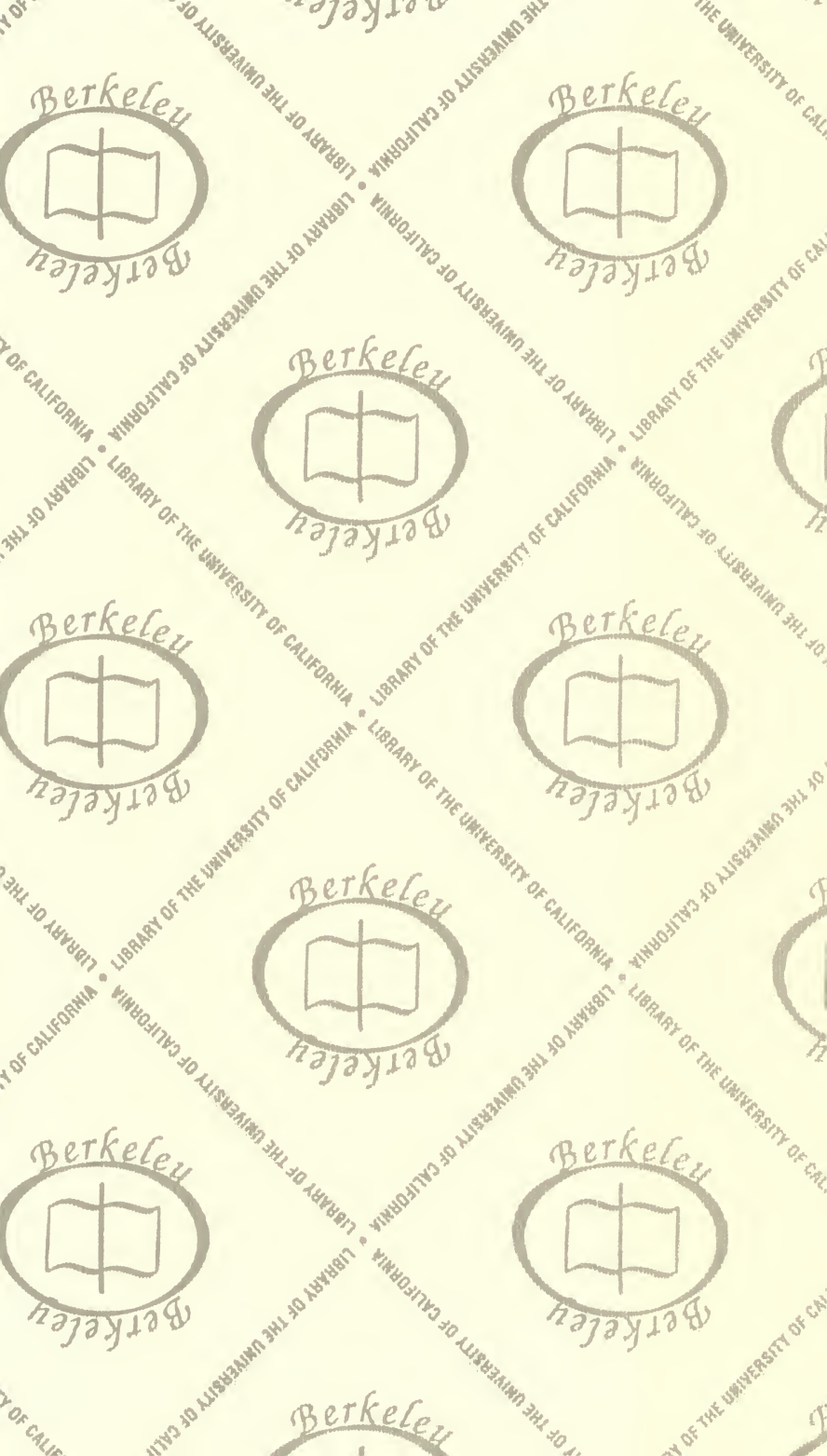


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INDIAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION,  
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## PEYOTE—AN INSIDIOUS EVIL

A majority of the States of the Union will, without doubt, adopt the proposed amendment to the Federal Constitution prohibiting the manufacture and use of intoxicants as a beverage, and it is confidently believed that the amendment will soon become the law of the land.

A more insidious, if not a greater, evil than the drink habit is menacing our Indian population in the use of peyote (anhalonium, often commercially designated "mescal buttons"), which is derived from certain cacti native in northern Mexico, and frequently called "dry whisky."

Hon. Carl Hayden has introduced a bill in the House of Representatives (H. R. 2614) embodying provisions for further protecting the Indians from the curse of the intoxicants, which includes the inhibition of the use and importation of Cannabis Indica, Indian hemp, anhalonium, or peyote, by Indians, "over whom, or over whose property, the Government, through its departments, exercises guardianship or supervision."

More specifically, the term "Indian Country" is defined by the proposed legislation to include reservations and Government Indian schools, right of ways, etc., and by reducing punishment of the violation of the statute for the *first* offense from "felony" to a misdemeanor, enables the Government to proceed by "information" rather than by "indictment," as at present, so that a more expeditious way may be had for securing a decision against transgressors of the law. Provisions are also included simplifying procedure



in seizure of liquors, attempts to kill officials in discharge of their duties, withholding information in compounding felonies, rendering records of telegraph and railroad companies available as evidence, and making the *possession* of the prohibited articles an offense.

(The spread of the peyote habit in various forms is alarming. The Indians on eighteen reservations in the various States already are largely adherents of the peyote cult, and their progress and development are seriously retarded.)

The product of the cactus is used by the peyote adherents in different ways, the most harmful practice believed to be that of chewing the dried top, called the "button." From personal investigation we are convinced that the importation and use of peyote and its derivatives should be prohibited among Indians. We quote from our Thirty-fourth Annual Report (1916):

(“It is urged by the Indians who are addicted to the peyote habit that the drug is used in their religious ceremonies, and therefore no interdiction should be promulgated regarding its use, since such an effort would be to deny to the cult freedom of religion, in violation of the guarantee of the Constitution. If that view is accepted, any vicious practice or use of drugs which undermines the morals and health may be upheld with equal force if it is associated in any manner with so-called religious ceremonies.)

“Various Indian tribes are being seriously affected by the use of peyote. Its advocates, we are informed, seek to influence the most thrifty Indians; and once under their control, liberal contributions for the parent organization follow. Among the latest victims succumbing to this enchantment are the Uintah and Ouray Indians in Utah.”

Dr. Henry Lloyd, resident physician at Uintah and Ouray Agency, Utah, in a letter to our Washington agent, dated December 2, 1916, says in part:

(“As to the effect of the drug peyote on the Ute Indians, I can now say, after two years of observation, that it has done more harm to them in more different ways than whisky, gambling, or any other influence.)

Worse  
than  
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Intervention  
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(Its physical effect is appalling. Its harmful effects are most noticeable on those who are already weak and depressed from disease or age, and upon both mother and babe in parturition. Because of the profound muscular paralysis it induces, the patient already struggling against low vitality quickly succumbs to a few doses of peyote.) The uterine muscle of the parturient woman is so completely paralyzed that normal contractions cease and delivery is often impossible; or if delivery does finally occur, the uterus fails to contract thereafter and fatal hemorrhage is the result.)

Phys.  
harmful

(5) women  
birth

“Another serious result of the use of this drug is the refusal of those who take it to submit to rational treatment by the physician. Indians who had learned to come to the agency physician and to employ scientific remedies under his instructions are taught by the ‘peyote chief’ to take no further treatment from physicians—to use no other remedial measures, but to depend entirely upon the miraculous effects of the peyote.

“Thus the work of years in teaching the Indian to use the white man’s methods of combating disease is undone.

“The effect of peyote on the morals of these Indians is beginning to be decidedly noticeable. Especially is this true with regard to sexual matters. Several recent separations of husband and wife who had lived contentedly together for years may be traced to the use of this drug.

“A number of young girls, some of whom had been attending school, have gone to the bad under the influence of peyote.

“The pretense of religious rite connected with its use is a travesty. The Sioux Indian, who introduced it here, is proved by the testimony of a reliable Sioux, Standing Bear, to be a thief and a suspected murderer.”

At the hearings on the Hayden bill before the House Committee on Indian Affairs during February, 1918, at which the Indian Rights Association was represented, conclusive testimony was submitted by Indians and others showing the need for legislation to prohibit the traffic in and use of peyote. Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, for twenty-nine years the Chief of the Bureau of Chemistry of the Department of Agriculture, in a clear and convincing manner told the Com-

mittee of the results of the investigation and experiments conducted by his Bureau, and urged the enactment of the legislation under consideration. Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin, a member of the Sioux Nation of Indians, informed the Committee of the results of her investigation and study of the effect of peyote upon the Uintah and Ouray Tribes, among whom she was located for several years. Regarding the use of peyote, Mr. and Mrs. Bonnin join in a letter to S. M. Brosius, Agent of the Association, in which it is stated in part:

“It excites the baser passions and is demoralizing—similar in its abnormal effects to that of opium, morphine, and cocaine.

“It creates false notions in the minds of the users, preventing sound logic and rational thought with which to meet the problems of their daily lives. Believing that peyote is the comforter sent by God, they reject the teachings of the Church. Believing that peyote reveals the secret thoughts of man and gives superhuman knowledge of the contents of books, they deprecate the necessity of schools. Believing peyote a cure-all for every human ailment, they ignore the advice and aid of physicians. Attending the weekly peyote meetings, they waste time, strength, and money, consequently neglecting their homes and farms.

“It has spread with alarming rapidity within the last two years, and now has close to 50 per cent. of the tribe.

“It appears to have been the direct cause of the death of 25 persons among these Utes within the last two years.

“After a careful study of the spread of peyote among the Utes, where we have labored some fourteen years, it appears to us that an unscrupulous organization, through its agents, is promoting the peyote cult, under a religious guise, solely for the easy money gotten from their superstitious victims. From reliable sources we derive the information that large collections of money are taken up at the weekly meetings, and no accounting made whatever. The Utes, who had cattle, sheep, and horses, were the very ones first singled out by the shrewd peyote agent. It is the money from sale of stock, together with \$15 subsistence checks, that is taken without any concern for the inevitable wreckage of body, mind, and soul of the pitiable victims.



“Since the use of peyote is spreading rapidly and is undermining the uplift work of the churches and our benevolent Government; since it is an American principle to protect helpless, downtrodden people from the ruthless hand of the oppressor; to restrain the unscrupulous greed of those who traffic upon the ignorance and superstition of a people, we do implore all earnest citizens of America for a Federal law to protect us against the traffic in and the indiscriminate use of peyote.

(Signed) “GERTRUDE BONNIN  
“RAYMOND T. BONNIN.”

“I have read the above, relative to the use of peyote. I hereby vouch for the veracity of these statements, and do concur with Mr. and Mrs. Bonnin in imploring some Federal action against this great evil, peyote.

(Signed) “M. J. HERSEY,  
“*Episcopal Missionary.*”

The Honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs urgently presented the need for legislation to prevent further destruction of Indian manhood from the use of this drug.

Dr. Lyman F. Kebler, for fifteen years Chief of the Drug Division, Bureau of Chemistry, of the Department of Agriculture, a licensed practitioner of medicine who has made a special study of habit-forming drugs, urged the enactment of prohibitive legislation against peyote.

After very full hearings, during which Indians who use or favor the peyote habit, and others, were given ample opportunity to present their views, the Committee on Indian Affairs submitted a favorable report (H. R. Report No. 560) May 13, 1918, in which they state:

“It is apparent, from the above evidence, that this dangerous drug should be absolutely prohibited. The proof is clear that the physicians, the chemists, the missionaries, and many of those who are endeavoring to uplift the Indian, are convinced of the harmful effects of peyote and desire to see its use discontinued. The States of Colorado, Nevada, and Utah have, by recent legislation, prohibited the use and sale of this poison.

“The writer of this report heard many Indians testify on behalf of the drug, and gave due weight to their testimony, but certainly they are to some extent interested, while the bulk of those advocating the passage of the bill are disinterested.

“The claim, stoutly maintained, that these night orgies in a close tent polluted with foul air should not be outlawed because of the religious character of the ceremonies should receive scant credit, although picturesque and eloquent Indian orators before the subcommittee pleaded persuasively for the ‘peyote religion,’ and insisted that it would be an unwarranted interference with their ‘constitutional’ rights to curtail the ‘worship’ of the peyote god. They cite Scripture to prove the Biblical justification of this alleged sacrament. In view of the fact that many reputable witnesses testify that many of these peyote feasts are attended with unrestrained libertinism, this particular claim, urged by Indian orators with great force, earnestness, and eloquence, might be met with the much-quoted question: ‘What plea so tainted and corrupt but being season’d with a gracious voice obscures the show of evil? what damned error, but some sober brow will bless it and approve it with a text?’”

The bill is now before the House, designated as House Calendar No. 154, awaiting consideration.

In view of the need for curative legislation relating to intoxicating liquor and peyote, we ask friends of the Indians to appeal to their Members of Congress to favor passage of these bills.

A similar measure (Senate No. 1862) is pending before the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate, which should also be favorably acted upon.

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