"THE DAWNING OF A BRIGHTER DAY"

Address delivered October 6, 1956 at the 127th Semi-Annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the Tabernacle at Salt Lake City, Utah by ELDER SPENCER W. KIMBALL, A Member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I should like to speak to you today about our Lamanite brothers. I quote from Nephite prophets:

"Thus saith God, I will afflict thy seed by the hand of the Gentiles, nevertheless I will soften the hearts of the Gentiles that they shall be like unto a father unto them." (2 Nephi 10:18.)

And again:

"...the Lord God will raise up a mighty nation among the Gentiles yea, even upon the face of this land; and by them shall our seed be scattered. And after our seed is scattered, the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and on their shoulders." (1 Nephi 22:7-8)

Relatively little progress had been made since Columbus discovered America, until recent years. Hundreds of thousands of Indians were killed by the invading Gentiles from Europe, 128,000 in New England alone, according to historians. The balance were pushed back, scattered and finally placed on reservations. The battle of America continued for hundreds of years, the red people fighting for their families, their homes, their hunting grounds, and their very existence.

Finally the scriptures are being fulfilled. "Nursing fathers and mothers" are being raised up to bring the blessings of freedom and education and health to the sons of Lehi. We can remember when the majority of Navajo children were without schools and other tribes were considerably limited. It is said that "The darkest hour is just before the dawn." But their day is dawning. There has perhaps been more constructive consideration given to the Indian people in the last decade than in the entire century before.

In 1947, the cry was raised: "The Navajos are freezing and starving." Truckloads of clothing and food were gathered here in Utah and taken from our Church Welfare storehouses for these distressed Indians. Simultaneously, the press took up the cry and the warm-hearted people of the nation, and particularly of the West, answered the call with bedding, food, clothing and money. The echoes resounded from ocean to ocean and a sleeping nation roused itself.

Pictures and stories of want and starvation were printed in newspapers and magazines; pressures were brought to bear upon officials, and the important prophecies began to be fulfilled and the arms of the Gentile nation, the United States, which had scattered the Lamanites, now opened to enfold them, and the shoulders which once were used to push them into reservations, now squared away to carry these deprived ones to their destiny. Even within the past two or three
years, great strides have been made. Education, the common denominator and leveler, is coming to the red man. The clinic and hospital are made available to him. Indian children are being born in hospitals, sanitation is being taught, and the sun is rising on the Indian world with the government, churches, and many agencies becoming "nursing parents" to them.

Yesterday, tribal people resisted education; today, they grasp it eagerly. Not long ago nearly all Indians were illiterate and unschooled; today nearly every Indian child in America may have some training. Yesterday Indian children were kidnapped from their parents and forced to school. Today parents beg for schools, and children eagerly attend.

Indian life is swiftly changing
Like the sand in wind-swept dunes,
Ever changing 'established patterns,
New strong forces, healing wounds.

Mr. Paul Jones, chairman of the Navajo Council, recalls his childhood in his inaugural speech of April 4, 1955:

"The salvation and hope of our Navajo people lies in education... at one time we made our living on livestock and a little corn patch. When we returned from Fort Sumner there were 9,000 of us. There are now 76,000...We must be educated in order to be absorbed with the rest of the people of these United States...those of you who have been educated must tell your people of the benefits of education...It is the greatest hope that we have for our Navajo people...When they returned (from Ft. Sumner) they were reluctant to send their children to school. The Federal Government had to send police out to gather the children for school... I remember myself distinctly. I was of school age at that time. My father and mother used to hide me under sheepskins and blankets when they saw a person coming who represented the schools. I was the only boy in the family. They used to hide me when they saw the school people or policemen coming. However, one bright day they made a mistake. My parents were not on the lookout, and someone saw me, even though I was hiding behind the hogan. That person said: 'That boy must go to school.' So away I went to school. But our eyes are now open to the advantages that school has for us..."

Today Mr. Jones is the educated and polished chief leader of the Navajo tribe.

The Treaty of 1868 with the Navajos provided that the government would provide a school and teacher for every 30 children between the ages of 6 and 16, "who can be induced or compelled to attend school." Compulsion is no longer used. Most Indian families have an obsession for school. It is a far cry from today back to 1744 when the Virginia commissioners made an offer to the chiefs of the Six Nations to educate six of their Indian boys.

The Virginia Commissioners received this reply from the Indian chiefs:

"Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but when they came back to us, they were bad runners; ignorant of every means of living in the woods; unable to bear either cold or
hunger; knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy; spoke our language imperfectly; were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, or counselors; they were totally good for nothing. We are, however, not the less obliged by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it. And to show our grateful sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make MEN of them."

That comes from the old records, and Dr. Wilkinson quoted it in the Indian Congress here last week.

It is of interest to note that in a feeble way the government has been trying for 200 years to educate the Indians, and from a few at the inception of the nation, today we approach universal education for them.

Now, may I tell you of our most perfect program and unselfish adventure in human relationships. The "outing" program had been attempted by others at times, but I think never on this basis. As we began to bring into the Church many faithful Indians, almost their first desire was that their children should have the schooling and church training which the non-Indian children enjoyed. Indian families working among us here in our beet, cotton, or potato fields, saw the luxury enjoyed by white children who were well fed and well dressed, in comfortable homes, going to excellent schools. They saw their own little deprived fellows who must follow the family to the far-away fields so parents could earn to feed them. Their dreams and yearnings finally forced the affectionate parents to become bold enough to approach a white employer: "Would you let our little girl stay with you and go to school after we have gone back to the reservation? She will be a good girl and cause you no trouble."

With the earnestness in their eyes and the pleading in their voices, who could resist? The experiment began. A few children were left in homes. They were happy and grateful. The foster parents were pleased, and neighbors wished also to participate. On the reservation, natural parents told their neighbors, who also wrote pleading letters for their own children. The number increased to 20, 60, 60, and then last year to 253. "It grew like Topsy." Arrangements at first were between natural parents on the reservation and willing foster parents in Utah; but when the Church determined to give it support, the plan was given legal status and brought under the Utah State Department of Public Welfare, children's service, through the state license of the Relief Society. Inasmuch as it is illegal for anyone without a state license to engage in any way in the placing or receiving of children, it is urged that neither missionaries nor members engage in the independent placement of children.

Here is how the plan works:

In August more than 250 Indian children move northward. The Begay family is typical. The Begays have a team and spring wagon and ride slowly across the hills and valleys and barren stretches to the gathering place. In the miles and miles of travel father and mother Begay have time to discuss with Ruth and Billie the great adventure ahead: "Here is your opportunity," father Begay is saying. "Our Church is taking you to a good Mormon home in Utah where you will be kindly treated and may go to school. You must be grateful and study hard and learn."
And now mother Begay, in her bobbed hair and colorful velveteen, is adding: "These Church members are doing this in the goodness of their hearts. They are not paid for the food and clothes and shelter and training that they are giving you. They will treat you like one of their own. You must do your part like the children of the family.

At last they reach The Gap in northern Arizona. Other Indian families are arriving also in wagons and pickups. The kindly driver loads their belongings in the chartered buses. Our friendly church chaperon meets the family and the children. Farewells are said and tears are shed as affectionate parents and children part for the school term. Though already homesick and lonely at heart, neither parents nor children would change their minds, so grateful are they for the opportunities just opening. The Begays and the Chees and the Billigodys hitch up their horses, and with a tearful happiness, drive to their homes on the reservation, while the buses, filled with eager, excited children, drive northward.

One observer wrote this of the parting:

"There were a few tears,—tears of premature home sickness from youngsters leaving the reservation for the first time and suddenly reluctant and fearful of the future. Tears from little brothers and sisters, too young or otherwise unqualified for the great adventure. And there were a few furtive tears from parents, realizing at this moment of parting how long and lonely the months stretched out before spring vacation."

Just a few hours and the buses are in Richfield, Utah. The kindly chaperon has kept them happy and looked after their every need. It is very early in the morning at the reception center, but it is already a hive of industry and keen expectancy is in the air. Sevier Stake becomes the host, and the stake presidency, members of the priesthood and the Relief Society sisters are waiting. There is the smell of bacon in the air, and the young redskins, some of whom have been here before, file out of the buses and into the church dining room for bacon, eggs, milk, fruit and cereal, prepared by the kindly Relief Society women.

Soon the breakfast is over. The processing is begun. Tenderly the women take the girls in one building and understanding priesthood brethren the boys in another, where they are bathed and shampooed and made ready for the clinic. The food, soap, shampoo and other things are furnished free by the Church. All who assist are volunteer workers, doing this like all other of their Church work, without remuneration. Six hundred towels are furnished free by a generous linen company, typical of many other contributions. The children line up for the clinic where several physicians, employed by the United States Health Service, senior medical students, technicians and several nurses, loaned by the Utah State Health Department, all go to work. The little folk's chests are x-rayed; their hearts, eyes, skin, ears, teeth and temperatures are checked and a complete record made. Their fears are quieted by sweet, sympathetic women when tears of unhappiness follow the needle-jabbing of immunization and the blood test. They come to know this is for their good. Lunch time comes, and another appetizing meal is enjoyed from welfare supplies. There is some rest and supervised play and a movie.

Then come the foster families, hundreds of them, from all over Utah. Unpaid families whose only desire is to unselfishly provide for the child and to "mother
and "father" him and train and guide him. They are driving in from Kanab and Salt Lake City; from Moroni and Escalante; from St. George and the Uintah Basin—unsurpassed families anticipating the new arrival to their family. There are stake presidents, bishops, mayors, editors, doctors, farmers—the finest people in the communities of Utah and of the world—each family to receive for the school term an Indian child, accepted by the members to become a real part of the family. The white children present, excitedly speculate as to which of the Indian youngsters, so hungrily eating luncheon, is to be their new brother or sister. In the stake tabernacle films are shown on Indian culture and a talk is given on the part each is to play in this glorious human drama. Four days of this processing follows.

Now, for the school term, the Indian child is on a par with his new brothers and sisters. He rides horses, feasts at picnics, does chores, goes swimming, takes music lessons. He goes to school and enters into every church, civic and community activity on an equal basis. Before the meal, the new family member take his turn in family prayers and blessing the food. He goes to Sunday School and priesthood meeting. The little ones go to Primary and the larger ones to M.I.A., and all the family go together to the Sacrament meeting. The child attends the seminary and is advanced in priesthood and auxiliary activities. Many do baptism work in the temples. In school he fits into the regular classes and if his language is faulty, likely the teacher will gladly give up her noon hour to tutor him. Foster parents write to natural parents, sending pictures. Case workers visit every child and family monthly, and visit school teachers and principals often and assure themselves that harmony and understanding prevail.

The Indian children have proven themselves to be alert, brilliant and responsive. They often take the lead in their classes, being elected to school offices, and they graduate from many high schools in Utah. They are going out into employment and are making good. The employer of one of our Indian girls in office work said:

"She is one of our best workers. I wish we had many more like her."

Four months and Christmas comes. The children remain in Utah where they share the Christmas gifts, parties and other kindnesses equal to and the same as the white children. Latter-day Saints have a keen interest in the Indians and are willing to share with and sacrifice for them.

Five more eventful months pass and 250 Indian children are on their way back to the reservation. Though some might like to remain in Utah, all are sent home to keep welded the natural family ties. Again farewells are said and tears are shed and they reluctantly leave their Utah homes and the tearful family whose home and hearts they have been sharing, and they fill the chartered buses again. The selected bus driver is exceptionally kind; the chaperon is most solicitous. No baggage is mixed, no children are lost, and a happy group turns homeward. Home! Family! Hours of pleasant travel, and the distribution center is reached. The missionaries are here to greet them and the Indian families are also here to gratefully enfold them into their hearts. For three happy months they will cement family ties on the reservation and then off for another year of school.

Much planning, and prayer, and fasting have gone into our program. In the summer the social workers travel through the reservation. They visit each Indian
home and get acquainted with the children and the parents, catching the spirit of
the family, its background, the training of the children and their individual
needs. With our missionaries, who nurture them constantly, these special workers
urge the parents to have the child examined and treated for dental and medical
needs. Proper legal contracts are secured and arrangements are made whereby
missionaries will pilot them the coming August to the proper place for embarkation.
Careful studies are made for efficient and understanding placement for the coming
year.

Now the workers return to the Utah communities and visit the white families
who have previously signified their willingness to cooperate. The home and its
facilities are studied to be sure the child and family will be compatible, com-
fortable and happy. The family is interviewed, and through a visit to the bishop
of the ward is evaluated and the worthiness of the family is determined. No child
of trusting Indian Church members is placed in a broken home or one which is not
an exemplary one. No child goes into a home where liquor is used or where there
is friction or delinquent children. He goes in a well ordered home where there
is the rare combination of kindness and discipline, firmness and affection; in a
praying family, a religious, devoted family of character, faith and love. Here
is opportunity at its best for the Indian to get away from his worst enemies:
idleness, liquor and immorality.

It is heart-warming to see the friendly cooperation of government, state and
local and school officials and teachers. Our Church classes have absorbed the
little fellows into their groups, and timid, shrinking children have become happy,
normal playmates and workmates and family members. One young Indian after five
consecutive years with a delightful, cooperative family, graduated from a Utah
high school where he was student-body president, and with a $350.00 Standard Oil
scholarship, attended the Brigham Young University, and he is now in the Northern
States Mission on a full, regular mission. Two other Indian boys are filling
regular missions in the Southwest Indian Mission where Oneida Indian girls have
also filled missions. This is the beginning. The future is most promising.

We expect our graduating youth will continue from these high schools into the
Brigham Young University. At first there were a few and some of them discontinued
but last year with 34 representing 18 tribes from east to west, and this year with
even more, they are already taking hold and stabilizing themselves. From now on
we expect that Indians in ever increasing numbers will be numbered in the graduat-
ing classes of the Brigham Young University, where special attention and
assistance are given them.

The Church has generously provided for an intermediate program whereby Indian
students who have come a little short of collegiate requirements may have special
tutorial service from skilled teachers. Scholarships are provided to assist
worthy students in the University, but many of our Indian children are already
paying their entire way.

Hundreds of our Indian youth are receiving character building and religious
training wherever they go in government schools in Kansas, Oklahoma, Oregon,
California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico and in the great Intermountain Indian
School at Brigham City, Utah, where we have a branch of the Church comprised of
Indians. Here, President David O. McKay last winter dedicated the commodious
chapel near the school wherein our youth are taught correct principles, all the
virtues, and the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
Our program is appreciated by the Indian people. When some opposition threatened the program last summer in one area, a petition was sent to us signed by many Indian parents pleading for the continuance of the program and reservation officials were also approached. The petition read:

"We parents feel that your organization has done wonders for our children, and we wish you would try every effort to place our children this year."

One prominent non-member observer wrote us:

"You have the most perfect program for Navajo children that has ever been initiated to this time. We are all grateful for its outstanding success."

Another said:

"I have never enjoyed a more wonderful experience in wholehearted cooperation and complete harmony of effort than I enjoyed at Richfield."

A tribal leader wrote us:

"...This is very gratifying to our Navajo people in that your organization has taken such interest in our Navajo children... We deeply appreciate your service to our Navajo people... There have been several notifications reporting the foster homes for educational purposes by your child placing agency as a very important and noteworthy help."

Two missionaries wrote, when the children had returned home for the summer:

"Yesterday in our testimony meeting, a mother of one of the girls who went to Utah this year, got up and told how grateful she was to our Father in heaven that her girl had been able to go to Utah where she could learn to pray, speak English better, cook, sew and gain the schooling that she wanted her child to have that she herself didn't get."

One woman wrote of the first Sacrament meeting after the return of the children from Utah how, without embarrassment, they had taken part in the services, giving talks, songs and some had borne testimony with such poise and impressiveness that the parents were amazed as well as were other Indian children who had been away to other schools.

In our great country, times are changing. Schools are provided for practically every Indian child and tribal funds are made available for determined but impecunious students. True religion and faith in the eternal God are replacing superstition; the physician is taking the place of the medicine man, and administration by the priesthood is replacing the sand patterns and the sings for the Latter-day Saint members. Young couples are obtaining licenses from court clerks and being married by ministers and bishops. Bodies are being buried much the same as the white dead. The Indians who still place on the grave meats and fruits and other foods, cannot understand why the dead of the white man can smell the flowers any more than that the Indian dead can enjoy the food. The destructive custom of
burning the home and its contents, when death occurs therein, is giving way. One of our sweet Apache converts wrote this at the death of her husband:

"I live in my house. I do not burn it like other Indians. I believe what the missionaries tell me. I think they are my brother."

This is our adventure in good citizenship and righteous living, our experiment in human relationships carried on by this, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Knowing the origin and destiny of the red men and believing the promises of God as recorded in the Book of Mormon, our people are willing to sacrifice for the progress and development of these whose deprivations pyramided mountain-high but whose curse is now being lifted. Hundreds more sacrificing Latter-day Saints may yet have the opportunity of providing temporary homes for Lehi's children to get an education and to learn the gospel and to become Church leaders.

This is not a proslyting program, for we bring from the reservations those Indian children who are already members of the Church and whose families generally are members. The program will make of good young people stalwart adults; it will fortify them against the evils of the world; it will train them to become self-sufficient; it will develop them into leaders prepared to return to their own people and bring to them the benefits which can come from education.

This program has many advantages: It has at once the multiple advantages of the boarding school, the day school, the home, the refining and cultural influences of an improved community.

The children are taught in superior schools fully accredited and among the best in the nation. They have sufficient companionship of their own race to retain their pride in and love for their own people, for in the same community and school are other Indian young people. They have the environment of the best communities where are found the least in the world's vices and the most of its culture and refinement. They retain their family ties with natural parents by correspondence, pictures, relayed reports and also letters through the case workers, and they return to their homes for the summer months to keep bound their home and family loves and loyalties. They grow naturally into the culture of America at its best, attending with a minority of their own group and a majority of the non-Indian children, activities in school, community, church and family. They are not institutionalized but individualized and become recognized members of the family where they are integrated and "counted in" for every family pleasure, adventure or sacred experience.

Our program is unique. Here is no family of marginal income who must take in a boarder to supplement the family living. Here is no mercenary care. But here non-Indian families absorb in a very real and lovable way, the Indian children as new members of the family. These families give, give, and give as only dedicated people will give. There is no remuneration for them; but their total compensation for the food, clothes, shelter, care and love they give is the satisfaction which comes in giving opportunity for an enriched life to one who could not otherwise have it.

We rejoice in the greatly accelerated schooling of Indian children by the Government, the states and other churches and agencies, but we present this
program of training in home and school and community as the finest program con-
ceived of man for the rapid and permanent advancement and progress of the Indian
child so long deprived. Let them have one generation of this sustained program,
and see a new Indian world of prosperity, culture and happiness.

In conclusion we say: God bless these selfless hundreds of families who have
become and are yet to become "nursing fathers and mothers" who will continue to
carry the chosen children of the ancient prophet Lehi "in their arms and upon their
shoulders," I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.