

# SELECTION 9

## The American Indian

### Vocabulary Review

if they were *impoverished*  
areas *impacted* with 75 percent unemployment  
important *dignitaries*

1 The opportunities we have for industrial development  
2 today among our Indian people are utterly fantastic. I  
3 used to be one of those do-gooders that said if a person was  
4 poor in the United States of America, if they didn't have a  
5 job, if they were impoverished, it was because they were  
6 lazy. But that is a misconception. Within 65 miles of Ok-  
7 lahoma City, we have several areas impacted with as high  
8 as 75 percent unemployment in the winter months. And  
9 many of the adult males in these areas never had an oppor-  
10 tunity to have a job at all. This is a serious problem in our  
11 nation. We have a tendency in our country to say, "Let  
12 Washington solve it. Let's shove it up there to the EDA. Let  
13 the President and Congress take care of the problem." I  
14 don't think they will ever be able to take care of problems  
15 such as this. I know they can't do it unless we, as private  
16 citizens, as industrialists, as people who own a business  
17 become concerned and really want to do something  
18 about it.

19 In the nation as a whole, 40 percent of the Indians who  
20 would like to work, don't have a job opportunity. In the  
21 state of Oklahoma, Indian unemployment is six times as

22 great as the unemployment in the population as a whole.  
23 The tragic thing in citing statistics such as these is that we  
24 tend to overlook the human element. We talk about this  
25 group or that group and forget that the Indian is a human  
26 being. The Indian is no different than I am—no different  
27 than you are. I believe our concern in our country today  
28 should be directed toward human beings.

29 I'll tell you a little of our experiences. I am chairman of  
30 the board of Sequoyah Industries. This year we will gross  
31 over a hundred million dollars. We hope to do a hundred  
32 fifty million dollars. We may not reach that, but we will  
33 come close. Six years ago we started. We were small. The  
34 first year we did five million dollars worth of business. The  
35 primary goal of our company was to provide job opportu-  
36 nities for Indian people. We went to a little town called  
37 Anadarko, Oklahoma. We didn't have too much money,  
38 and we had to have help from a lot of people. Anadarko  
39 needed to raise sixty thousand dollars. One day in talking  
40 to the people in Anadarko about help needed to establish  
41 our industry, we said we wanted to give Indians a chance  
42 to work. They had a group of people there at a breakfast,  
43 and I was hoping everyone would jump up and say, "I'll  
44 put in a thousand, or I'll go five hundred." But no one  
45 moved. Finally, one young man, an auto supply dealer,  
46 stood up and said, "I'll say what everybody else is think-  
47 ing. We don't think your industry can succeed if you  
48 employ Indians, because Indians are lazy. Indians drink  
49 too much booze. Any time they have a payday, they go off  
50 and get drunk and they will not come back for several  
51 days. We don't think you can be successful employing  
52 them."

53 I also visited my banker. He was the man who had  
54 loaned me five thousand dollars when I had zero assets  
55 and was 20 years of age. He had a lot of faith in me. I talked  
56 to him about borrowing a little more money. I didn't have  
57 quite enough. He said, "Don, it's a shame you're going to  
58 lose everything you have worked for. I have been around  
59 Indians all my life and they just won't work." Now, you  
60 have heard this and I've heard this, but it just isn't true. An  
61 Indian is like any other human being. The Indians have  
62 been bypassed and their problems overlooked, and we  
63 have not been as concerned as we should be. We fought a

64 war with Japan, and we fought a war with Germany. We  
65 helped them to rebuild afterwards. I think that is a good  
66 thing to do—help to rebuild. We fought wars years and  
67 years ago with the Indians, and actually most of the things  
68 we have done to help rebuild had a tendency to hold them  
69 back and hold them down, rather than help them move  
70 forward.

71 Most of the Indians I know can tell in a minute if you are  
72 for real or if you are false. If you are sincere and are  
73 concerned with them, they will do anything for you.  
74 They'll love you, respect you, and work their head off for  
75 you. They'll be your friend for life. We hear a lot about  
76 problems between management and employees. If you  
77 will treat an Indian right, you will never have a labor  
78 problem. He will be totally on your side because he ap-  
79 preciates the opportunity you have provided for him.

80 Pop Warner, a football coach, had a bunch of Indians on  
81 his football team. He tried to get them in shape. He had  
82 them doing calisthenics like all football players do. They  
83 didn't like it. He couldn't get them to do it. He didn't say  
84 all Indians were lazy because these boys didn't do the  
85 calisthenics to get in shape. Instead, Pop Warner went  
86 around and talked with some of the Indian parents to find  
87 out what could be done. With their help, he figured out a  
88 new way to motivate them. He loaded his Indian players  
89 on the school bus and went two miles away from the  
90 college. He put each one of the players off the bus and  
91 handed them a tow sack. He said, "Take this tow sack, go  
92 out there and catch two rabbits any way you want to. Then  
93 run back to town as fast as you can." They did it! They got  
94 in shape. He learned to motivate these fellows based on  
95 their background, not based on his. As a direct result, he  
96 had a nation's champion in his caliber of football teams.  
97 There was one fellow in particular, a 158-pound fullback  
98 who was not very big for a fullback, but was a great  
99 athlete. His name was Jim Thorpe. I doubt that Jim  
100 Thorpe could have become the outstanding athlete that he  
101 was if Pop Warner had not learned to motivate him based  
102 on his background.

103 I'll tell you some of the experiences we have had when  
104 we started Sequoyah. We didn't have much money and  
105 there was a great possibility we would go broke. We put

106 our equipment in and were trying to get it running. We  
107 had a very important tufting machine that had a total of  
108 twelve hundred needles in it that had to be threaded. We  
109 threaded and started it, and it went crunch, crunch,  
110 crunch, and all the thread came out. We couldn't figure out  
111 what was wrong. Something was put in backwards by the  
112 manufacturer, but we didn't know that at the time. We  
113 had a white supervisor who didn't know much about the  
114 machine. He was worried to death. He lost 18 pounds in a  
115 two-week period. But we had three Indian boys whose job  
116 it was, when it went crunch, crunch, crunch, to go right  
117 back in there and rethread the machine. It didn't bother  
118 these fellows at all! They were able to stay in there to do  
119 the same thing over and over again and not blow their  
120 cool. This is a great advantage.

121 There are many jobs an Indian can do better because of  
122 his background. We got the tufting machine running but  
123 only at 35 percent efficiency. The industry as a whole runs  
124 at 65 percent efficiency. If you take the number of stitches  
125 it can make in an hour's time and multiply it by 4, that's  
126 100 percent. The whole industry said 65 percent is real  
127 good, and we tried to get up to that level. We put marks on  
128 the wall and said yesterday we did this much, so today  
129 let's get past that. It didn't work. We had mostly Indians in  
130 our tufting department, and we didn't motivate them.  
131 Instead of saying Indians are lazy and they can't run a  
132 tufting machine, we began to ask ourselves, "Why are we  
133 failing?" We sat down with a group of them and one Indian  
134 mother told me, "You know, we have trouble with some of  
135 our Indian boys in school because they never hold up their  
136 hands to answer questions." I said, "What do you mean?"  
137 She replied, "We teach them that they shouldn't try to  
138 push themselves and work ahead of someone else." I asked  
139 her where could they push themselves ahead, and she  
140 answered, "They can push themselves ahead in hunting  
141 and fishing and athletic contests and things like that." So,  
142 the next morning we had a meeting with our tufters. We  
143 said, "You think this is work running this machine? No,  
144 it's not work. It's an athletic contest. The person who has  
145 the best coordination between eye and fingers and the guy  
146 that would be best at shooting a bow and arrow because he  
147 can notice each one of these threads when they start to

148 come loose and the guy that's on his toes and moves the  
149 fastest is going to win this contest." They said, "You mean  
150 that?" They started to work and within that week we had  
151 jumped from 35 percent efficiency to 97 percent efficiency.  
152 We average today better than 95 percent efficiency. This is  
153 unheard of and unknown to the industry.

154 There is a big thing at Sequoyah called loyalty. We had a  
155 big fellow who was a direct descendant of Geronimo. His  
156 name was Elmer Jay. Elmer was one of our first twenty-  
157 two employees. Since he was a leader, it wasn't long be-  
158 fore he became a supervisor. He was the supervisor in  
159 charge of shipping and receiving. One day I happened to  
160 be in the front office, and Elmer walked in and said, "Don,  
161 I just got a call from my home. My house is on fire. It's  
162 burning up." I thought, now what kind of trick is Elmer  
163 going to pull on Don today. I took a look at him and said,  
164 "Elmer, I don't know how you're pulling my leg, but usu-  
165 ally a house burns down, not up." He said up or down it  
166 was on fire. I asked him if he needed a car because I knew  
167 he had an old clunker of a car. I asked him why he wasn't  
168 home, and he said, "I can't. My assistant is off, and I don't  
169 have anybody to supervise the loading of the carpet. I've  
170 got to get it loaded before I go home." I asked him who  
171 taught him to load carpet, and he said I did. I took charge  
172 while he went home to see about his house. It burned down  
173 to the foundation. But that man did not leave his job until  
174 someone took over the responsibility he had. By the way, it  
175 took us three months to get all the mistakes corrected that  
176 I made when I supervised the loading of the carpet.

177 Where can you find this type of loyalty? Can you buy it? I  
178 don't think so. I think that one thing you can gain by  
179 locating a plant in Indian areas is total loyalty and com-  
180 mitment.

181 We once uncovered a theft ring at our carpet mill. They  
182 were smuggling carpet out on the midnight shift in our  
183 own trucks and selling it to other thieves. We hired private  
184 detectives. We found that 31 people were involved. And  
185 though over half of our employees were Indians, not one of  
186 the 31 was an Indian. They were all white. I felt good about  
187 that when we finished the investigation and apprehended  
188 the thieves. The Indians had given us complete loyalty.

189 Our Indian people are careful with their money. For

190 example, our Indian people voted to have their profit shar-  
191 ing put back for retirement. They voted to do this for one  
192 main reason—they don't want to be dependent upon any-  
193 one else again; they want to stand on their own two feet.  
194 All the Indian people are asking for is a chance. They've  
195 had it up to here with handouts—they don't want that.  
196 They only want you to respect them for what they are as  
197 human beings, and to give them an opportunity. If we look  
198 to Washington to solve this problem, there will be many  
199 generations doing so. I think as American citizens, as  
200 business people, we can solve this problem much faster.

201 I don't know what you want out of life. Maybe you want  
202 to be as rich as J. Paul Getty. That's not too big a goal, but  
203 it really won't mean much to you in terms of happiness  
204 and quality of life. Maybe you want to be big, important  
205 and respected. That's a pretty good goal. I think we all  
206 should have that in mind. But when you boil it all down,  
207 wouldn't you just like to know that you gave another  
208 fellow human being a chance at a better quality of life?  
209 That's a far better goal and it's one that you can easily  
210 attain.

211 Here is another story that happened when we opened  
212 our plant. We had 3,000 people who came to the opening  
213 ceremony. We had a United States Senator, a Con-  
214 gressman, and our Governor there, and I was taking them  
215 through the plant. Our son, John, was six years of age at  
216 the time. He was very proud of his dad, being chairman of  
217 the board of this new plant, and he was excited about that  
218 particular day. But John wasn't as excited as another lad  
219 the same size as he. This boy's father was an Indian, who  
220 had lived on welfare and had never held a job more than  
221 six months duration. The guy wasn't the smartest in the  
222 whole plant. His job was one of the least technical. How-  
223 ever, there he was, standing straight and tall at his job,  
224 which was to take the roll of carpet when it came out of the  
225 final drying oven and tie a string around one end of it. He  
226 was to do this all day long. Along came this man's son, a  
227 boy I remember seeing with his brothers and sisters stand  
228 in the food commodity line that the County Commission-  
229 ers have for people who don't have enough to eat in  
230 Anadarko. The little fellow was clean, not too fancily

231 dressed, but clean. We had ropes up to prohibit people  
232 from entering the work area but I saw the boy run under  
233 the ropes, and go to the work area. He turned and looked at  
234 all the people standing there, and happened to face right  
235 between the Governor and the United States Senator. I  
236 don't think he knew what important dignitaries they  
237 were, and I doubt that he cared. He merely pointed up to  
238 his dad, and said with greatest of pride, "That's my  
239 Daddy!" When he looked up at his dad, I saw pride and  
240 admiration, but I wondered whether he could have said  
241 that if his dad had had no other opportunity than to go to  
242 the commodity line and get free groceries. Could you im-  
243 agine this little boy standing there with pride, pointing at  
244 his dad standing in that line, living on handouts? In just a  
245 few short weeks, he had learned that it was self-respecting  
246 to make your own living, and he was proud of his father in  
247 that job. That's been six years ago. His father is still with  
248 us, and he's a good employee. That young man is now  
249 approaching his teen years. I know that when he becomes  
250 an adult, he will want to make a living for himself, and he  
251 will want to help others do the same.

252 I don't know how much money you've made in your life.  
253 I don't know how many important honors you have re-  
254 ceived, but of all the honors I have received, and of all the  
255 money I have ever made, to see that boy's pride in his dad  
256 made me feel better inside than any great honor or any-  
257 thing else. Perhaps the greatest reward you can receive, if  
258 you'll become interested in this Indian problem and estab-  
259 lish plants and give job opportunities, is that good feeling  
260 inside when you see a friend that never had a chance  
261 before and is now successful. That reward will be enriched  
262 when they look you square in the eye, grab your hand  
263 when you come into the plant or put their arm around you,  
264 and tell you about their better way of life. If you find  
265 anything that is better than this, gentleman, I suggest you  
266 pursue it. However, if you're looking for real meaning in  
267 your life, and you don't have all the satisfaction you want  
268 in your industrial accomplishments, I suggest you take a  
269 look at the opportunity you have in providing opportuni-  
270 ties, not a handout but a hand up, to your fellow Ameri-  
271 cans ... the American Indian. Thank you.

## Selection 9 Comprehension Questions

Decide whether each of the following statements is true or false according to the selection. Then mark T or F in the appropriate place.

- \_\_\_ 1. The author stresses the fact that Indian employees are loyal.
- \_\_\_ 2. The author stresses the fact that Indian employees are lazy.
- \_\_\_ 3. There are many jobs that Indians can do better because of their background.
- \_\_\_ 4. The author had considerable difficulty raising money to get Sequoyah Industries started.
- \_\_\_ 5. The Indian tribes themselves got the money that was needed to get Sequoyah Industries started.

Choose the correct answer for each of the following questions and circle the letter before it.

6. Which of the following statements is *not* true according to the selection?
- a. Of the 31 people involved in the theft ring, only 4 were Indians.
  - b. Sequoyah Industries was able to raise efficiency at running tufting machines to over 95 percent.
  - c. Indians are taught not to try to push themselves ahead of anyone else except in athletics.
  - d. Sequoyah Industries' Indian employees voted to put their profit-sharing money back for retirement.
7. In which state did most of the activities discussed here take place?
- a. New Mexico.
  - b. Arizona.
  - c. North Dakota.
  - d. Oklahoma.

8. Which of the following statements is true according to the selection?
- a. One Indian supervisor stayed on the job even though he knew his house was burning down.
  - b. Pop Warner had considerable difficulty getting Jim Thorpe into shape.
  - c. The company motivated their Indian employees by giving them time off for fishing whenever they reached a certain production level.
  - d. The author finally got a major part of the money he needed from a banker who had a lot of faith in him.
9. Which machine gave the company a lot of trouble, mostly because it was incorrectly installed?
- a. A threading machine.
  - b. A tufting machine.
  - c. A stitching machine.
  - d. A binding machine.
10. Which was *not* mentioned as a quality of American Indians that would make them desirable employees?
- a. Their patience.
  - b. Their sense of responsibility.
  - c. Their sense of humor.
  - d. Their honesty.