The New Deal Indian Commissioner: Ickes vs. Collier

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IN THE SPRING of 1933 to the surprise of many and the dismay of not a few, President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt named two relative unknowns to high posts in the Interior Department. Harold Ickes, a maverick, Bull Moose Republican, became Secretary of the Interior. John Collier, a vociferous but apolitical critic of Federal Indian policy, was appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Both Ickes and Collier have recorded their recollections of the events which led to their appointments, and Ickes' version of his appointment has been reprinted in a number of standard histories of the New Deal. In his memoir, published after Ickes' death, Collier claimed considerable credit for Ickes' selection as Secretary of the Interior, implying that it was largely as a result of his influence that Ickes "who had been an able and vigorous champion of the Indian cause" but "who was not nationally prominent" was ultimately chosen for the Cabinet post. Collier also maintained that after Roosevelt's election he personally had intended to go to Mexico to write a book on "the Indians of this hemisphere," but that he reluctantly abandoned this plan in order to become Indian

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CHOOSING THE NEW DEAL INDIAN COMMISSIONER:
ICKES VS. COLLIER

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Commissioner after being persuaded that if he did not, Edgar B. Meritt, a former Assistant Commissioner, whom he regarded as symbolic of all that was evil in Federal Indian policy, would be appointed.¹

The real story is considerably more complex than either Ickes or Collier revealed. It is probable that it was even more complex than either man knew at the time. Ickes' claim to a Federal appointment, as he has recorded, stemmed from his efforts during the 1932 presidential campaign to rally old Bull Moose Republicans to Roosevelt's banner. First, he agreed to serve on the national committee of the National Progressive League which Senator George Norris formed in the late summer of 1932. Comprised of such distinguished Progressives as Felix Frankfurter, Frederick C. Howe, Ray Stannard Baker, Bainbridge Colby, Amos Pinchot, Donald Richberg, Henry Wallace, and Senators Hiram Johnson, Burton K. Wheeler, Edward Costigan, and Bronson Cutting, all of whom declared for Roosevelt, the League formed in Roosevelt's words, "an honor roll from old wars."² Later, at the request of Arthur Mullen, a member of the Democratic National Committee, Ickes agreed to head the Western Independent Republican Committee for Roosevelt. His wife, who was running for a third term in the Illinois legislature as a regular Republican, opposed this decision because Ickes was also heading her campaign. To pacify her, Ickes promised that if Roosevelt were elected he would try to get himself appointed Commissioner of Indian Affairs, since "both of us had long been interested in Indians."³

Immediately following the election Ickes was visited by an old friend, Charles de Y. Elkus, a San Francisco attorney who was also president of the northern branch of the American Indian Defense Association of which John Collier was national executive secretary. Ickes broached the subject of the Indian Commissionership to Elkus who enthusiastically encouraged him and promised to take up the matter with Ickes' mentor, Senator Hiram Johnson, on his return home. According to Ickes, Johnson was sympathetic but said he would make no recommendations to Roosevelt unless requested to do so. Ickes' own probe in Washington revealed "no
spot soft and yielding to the touch,” until Collier wired him to come immediately to Washington. There he was advised by Collier and two associates, Lewis Meriam and Nathan Margold, to seek the more important position of first assistant Secretary. Greatly interested in this new possibility, Ickes consulted with Senators Bronson Cutting, Gerald Nye, Robert LaFollette, Jr., and Edward T. Costigan, all of whom not only endorsed his candidacy, but also apparently encouraged him to think in terms of the Secretary’s job itself. At the same time, like Hiram Johnson, they refused to volunteer recommendations to Roosevelt. After weeks of fruitless waiting, during which Roosevelt failed to seek advice from the Progressive camp, Ickes became discouraged and returned to Chicago where he wrote to Senator Johnson:

It was, of course, too much for me to hope that there was any chance of me realizing my ambition to be Secretary of the Interior. . . . Luck has never broken my way in political matters, but on the whole I have been content to labor in the ranks and do what I could for the common good. Fortunately, I am too much of a realist to have allowed my hopes to run away with me. I never expected anything of this sort to come my way but I thought it worth a trial anyhow."}

While Ickes was licking his wounds, the series of events which were to result in his appointment as Secretary of the Interior was approaching its climax. Although Ickes was aware that his friend John Collier was instrumental in his appointment as Secretary, he was never to know that Collier was strongly motivated by his opposition to Ickes as Indian Commissioner.

Collier and Ickes, both proud, defensive, and strong-willed men, were not, prior to 1933, such close friends as the preceding paragraphs might imply. As a matter of fact, after becoming one of the first directors of Collier’s American Indian Defense Association in 1923, Ickes angrily resigned six months later when Collier fired the AIDA attorney, Francis C. Wilson of Santa Fe, in a controversy which split the fledgling organization in two and weakened its effectiveness for several years. Later Ickes unofficially returned to the AIDA fold, only to fall out with Collier again in
1931 in a similar conflict, this time over Collier’s attack on another prominent resident of Santa Fe, Herbert C. Hagerman. This second estrangement, although less destructive than the first, particularly rankled Collier because he believed that it cost him the support of Hiram Johnson and other Senate Progressives at a crucial time in his battle with the Hoover administration.\(^6\)

Contrary to the assertions in his memoir that Ickes headed his own list of candidates for the Indian Commissionership and that he was “dismayed” at being offered the job himself, John Collier set out to capture control of Roosevelt’s Indian policy as early as August 1932. He put in motion a plan whereby he might become Indian Commissioner shortly after the election was over.

While recuperating from a serious automobile accident at Taos in the late summer of 1932, Collier conceived a plan to pressure Roosevelt into taking a stand for Indian policy reform. According to this scheme, Collier would write directly to Roosevelt, urging him to publicly endorse a declaration of policy which Collier had drafted. “Certain members of Congress and others [would then] forcibly call his attention” to Collier’s letter and the declaration. If Roosevelt could be persuaded to endorse this policy statement, Collier argued, he would then be bound, if he won the election, to seek out the advice of “competent and disinterested men” before any appointments were made. The “competent and disinterested men” whom Collier had in mind were Lewis Meriam, the Brookings Institution economist who in 1928 had edited the influential and critical study of the Indian Service entitled The Problem of Indian Administration, and Nathan Margold, a protégé of Felix Frankfurter who served as legal counsel on minority groups to the American Civil Liberties Union. Not only would such a plan “go far to insure our program if he wins,” Collier wrote, but it would also cause Roosevelt to “at least hesitate before committing himself to a political appointment like [Democratic ex-Commissioner] Cato Sells or Meritt.”\(^7\)

In early September Collier submitted this scheme to four leading supporters of the American Indian Defense Association: Dr. Haven Emerson, a Columbia University surgeon who served
as national president of the AIDA; Howard Gans, a prominent New York attorney; Dr. John Randolph Haynes of Los Angeles, Collier’s secret financial “angel;” and Charles de Y. Elkus. Gans and Elkus, both Republicans, immediately vetoed the plan on the grounds that it was “partisan political activity and likely to backfire.” But Collier, who had seen the financial support of AIDA diminish steadily in the wake of the Great Depression and had several times expressed misgivings about its ability to survive, did not quit. In late October he confided to a friend that “right after the election, if Roosevelt be elected, I must somehow get East to try to swing the appointment, or at least influence the policy about appointments.” The chief difficulty in getting East, a lack of money, was unexpectedly solved in early November when Collier was notified that Ernst Huber, a Johns Hopkins professor of anatomy and a director of the AIDA, had committed suicide, leaving to the organization a $4,000 insurance policy.

On November 4, four days before the election, Collier met in Los Angeles with three of his oldest friends in the Indian reform movement: Dr. Haynes, Stella Atwood “who has long known and actively corresponded with Mrs. Roosevelt,” and Walter Woehlke, a publicist and the former editor of the popular California monthly, *Sunset Magazine*. Convinced that Roosevelt would win, Collier and his southern California advisors agreed that he must be contacted immediately after the election “through some intimate friend whom he would expect to be concerned with the subject.” Collier suggested to Lewis Meriam that he approach George Foster Peabody, a nonagenarian Georgia banker who had once been treasurer of the Democratic National Committee and who presently served with Roosevelt as a trustee of the Warm Springs Health Foundation. In a similar letter to Margold, Collier suggested that he approach Felix Frankfurter. In both letters Collier mentioned potentially desirable candidates for the post of Commissioner: Meriam, Margold, W. Carson Ryan, the Indian Bureau’s chief educational officer, and himself, at the same time denying that any of them really wanted the job. Until one of them, or someone else more attractive “politically” should emerge,
however, he suggested that they work together to influence Roosevelt in an advisory capacity, rather than permitting their supporters to press their individual candidacies. "If one of those named were to be a prospective candidate" at this time, he warned, the effort "might not succeed and then our effort would have been expended—our bullet would have been shot."11

It was shortly after this plan was launched that Collier learned from Elkus of Harold Ickes' interest in the Indian Commissionership. Collier's response, unknown to both Elkus and Ickes, was decidedly hostile. In a letter to Mrs. Atwood, written shortly after the election, he advised her that Ickes was a potential candidate, and added, "his personal idiosyncracies unfit him for the task which requires considerateness of co-workers, subordinates, cooperation with Congress and subordination of egoism." On November 16 he also informed Meriam, saying he was unimpressed by Ickes' candidacy: "He is personally impracticable, while as for his record in Indian matters, he has none."12

While Collier was seeking ways to get his proposal before Roosevelt, at the same time cutting off Ickes, Dr. Haynes launched his own campaign in support of Collier's candidacy. On November 16, Haynes wired Judson King, the executive secretary of the Popular Government League in Washington and one of the nation's most outspoken advocates of public power development (Haynes was also the chief financial angel of the League which he and George Norris had created in 1913), asking him to sound out Norris and other "key men" about the possibility of Collier's appointment. King, who had just returned from a "personal and confidential interview" with Roosevelt on the topic of public power, was ecstatic: "there is no man on earth I would prefer to see in the office of Indian Commissioner so much as our friend, John Collier." Norris and other Senators were not in Washington, King advised, but he would contact them as soon as they returned. Meanwhile, he added, at his next conference "in the not distant future, . . . I shall certainly talk with Roosevelt about John and the Indian work."18
The next step toward securing the Commissionership was taken by Collier himself who met with Senator Bronson Cutting in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in late November 1932. Cutting, Collier learned, was “powerfully interested” in the Indian post and “will go to Roosevelt to insure that no hurried action is taken.” When he raised the possibility of securing the appointment of “Meriam, Margold, or myself,” Cutting assured him that “none of us are significantly handicapped.” It was at this time that Collier suggested to Cutting the possibility of Ickes for first assistant Secretary. Cutting replied that he knew Ickes and “thinks well of him without professing to know about his personal practicability.”

After receiving this encouragement, Collier left immediately for Washington.

When Charles Elkus learned of Collier’s conversation with Cutting, he immediately informed Ickes that Collier had suggested him for the more prestigious post, but at the same time he asked Collier to add Ickes to the triumvirate which he was pressing on Cutting for the Indian Commissionership. Collier’s reply was negative. Meriam, he informed Elkus, was “checking on Ickes’ record and standing in Chicago,” because Judson King, who had known Ickes since 1914, had expressed opposition on the ground of “his impracticability in human relations. Until I find out more I don’t believe that we ought to include him among the recommended people. . . . Furthermore, I do not feel complete certainty that Ickes would not through Hiram Johnson cut across our operations in a premature way.” Margold, Meriam, and Collier had decided in any event “to hold off from any initiative whatever,” until “after I see Senator Cutting on his arrival from Warm Springs which will be Sunday [December 4] or Monday [December 5]. There are reasons for thinking that Cutting will largely control the appointment if he wants to.”

In mid-December, Collier’s move for the Commissionership began to accelerate. Despite continued misgivings on the part of Charles Elkus who advised Collier against appearing to seek the position (“Your candidacy presents some difficult problems. If
it is at all aggressive and you fail, the Association will necessarily suffer and so the Indians. . . . I have regretted that we did not have a chance to discuss this matter fully before you left.”), Collier received encouraging news from Bronson Cutting upon his return from Warm Springs. "The President-elect" had thus far given "little thought to the matter" of Indian affairs and thus there was no need to fear a sudden political appointment. Cutting, however, had "given a good deal of thought to the matter of a new Indian Commissioner," as he told Charles Fahy, an AIDA attorney in Santa Fe, "and I quite agree with you that Collier would be the best man for the place." He suggested that Collier's supporters begin to round up endorsements for his appointment.

While he would continue to speak of Margold, Meriam, and himself as equally acceptable candidates, Collier decided shortly after Christmas to press his own candidacy. Meriam, as he had known since August when the plan was first discussed, did not want the position, doubted his ability to handle the job, and had reluctantly gone along with the plan only out of a strong sense of duty: "I couldn't decline if that's what I were asked to do but I'd rather not wish on the Indians another experiment." Margold's chances dimmed when Frankfurter informed him in late November that since he was not "intimate" with Roosevelt, he could not, therefore, recommend anyone unless requested to do so. Roger Baldwin, the executive secretary of the ACLU, also expressed reservations about Margold, suggesting instead, as indeed it was to happen, that Margold would be better suited to the office of Solicitor in the Department of the Interior. Collier's reply to Baldwin on December 4 signaled the beginning of his campaign. Margold, he confessed, was handicapped "by youth, coming from New York, maybe because a Jew," while Meriam, he had decided, was not "dynamic enough."

On December 27, following a conference with Cutting and Judson King at which it was decided that Collier stood as good a chance as anyone presently available, Collier notified Dr. Haynes that the time had come for him to speak to William G. McAdoo, the Democratic Senator-elect from California, and to write Hiram
Johnson and Roosevelt in his behalf. Meriam and Margold were likewise instructed to "turn [their] friends loose" but, Collier warned, there was to be no "public promotion" of any of the candidates since he still hoped, through Cutting, to have them called in as advisors to Roosevelt. Towards this end he had prepared "a powerful memorandum" outlining the needed policy changes and denouncing candidates considered harmful.19

Even before notifying Haynes, Collier, as he had done so often throughout the 1920's, arranged for a demonstration of Indian support from the Pueblos of New Mexico. The All Pueblo Council should be called into session, he advised the AIDA attorneys in Santa Fe, to register its choice for the new commissioner and to elect delegates who would come East to confer with Roosevelt. Confidentially, Collier later informed Haynes, "I anticipate that the Council will put me forward as its choice, although I have not made this suggestion in any way." Thinking he had arranged with Haynes and the Indians to get the campaign rolling, Collier then circularized all his AIDA supporters, advising them that because there was "imminent danger" that the commissionship might go to "one of the unnumbered patronage seekers," he, along with Meriam and Margold, had reluctantly consented to enter the race.20

The next few weeks might have proved disastrous to Collier's chances but fortune smiled on his ambition. Dr. Haynes and others bombarded McAdoo's Los Angeles office with letters and telegrams but, they learned much later, the Senator was in Washington and the endorsements had not been forwarded. The Pueblo Council failed to meet in time for the scheduled conference with Roosevelt but the impetuous Mabel Dodge Luhan saved the day when she put her husband, Tony Luhan, and another Taos Indian, Antonio Mirabal, on an eastbound train. On January 11 this "Pueblo delegation" met with the Roosevelts and endorsed Collier as planned. Through Cutting's assistance, Collier, Meriam, Margold, and Haven Emerson met with Raymond Moley the evening before the Indian reception and placed in his hands the memorandum which Collier had earlier prepared. Although he
could make no prediction at this time, Collier was optimistic. Following these meetings he wired Harold Ickes to come to Washington "promptly;" there was a chance that he might be made first assistant Secretary.21

Following the meeting with Moley, Collier’s campaign began to bog down and he found himself on the periphery of events for the next two weeks. Although he succeeded in convincing Ickes to withdraw from the Commissioner’s race, he learned on January 20 that the Senate Progressives had decided as a group to take no initiative in appointment matters. Since Roosevelt continued to refrain from soliciting their advice, Collier informed Dr. Haynes, “a stalemate” had resulted. Collier did learn that Cutting had conferred with Roosevelt on January 19 and again on January 20 “about Indian matters,” and that he had suggested to the President-elect at these meetings that he confer with Felix Frankfurter about the Indian appointment. Collier immediately wrote Frankfurter, enclosing a condensed version of the memorandum which he had submitted earlier to Moley and requesting an opportunity to talk with him soon.22

On February 5 in Boston, Collier, Meriam, and Margold met with Frankfurter but, in Collier’s words, the meeting, while “very interesting” was “inconclusive.” While he thought Frankfurter would “throw his influence . . . probably, in the first instance, behind myself,” he was not certain of this and besides, days passed and Roosevelt did not get in touch with Frankfurter.23

During this period of “stalemate,” Collier had received several disturbing reports that boded ill for his candidacy. Senator McAdoo, whom he had hoped would send in an endorsement, proved elusive. When Dr. Haynes finally managed to speak with him on February 2, McAdoo promised merely to initiate inquiry into Collier’s record and to “do his best,” telling Haynes that he had promised Roosevelt not to make any recommendations. When Haynes suggested that he contact Moley and Frankfurter, McAdoo replied that “he did not know Moley and he did not want to know Frankfurter.”24 At this same time Collier learned that Senators Burton K. Wheeler of Montana and Sam G. Bratton of New Mex-
ico had teamed up to support one Harry Mitchell of Montana. To make matters worse, he learned in late January that Charles Elkus and other influential Californians had declined to give him an unqualified endorsement, believing, as they had stated before, that he should stay out of politics and continue his work as executive secretary of the AIDA. Though he did not despair, there was a rising note of anxiety in his correspondence as the month of January came to an end.25

On January 30 Collier notified several of his closest friends that “it is a highly confidential fact that Cutting has been offered the Secretaryship of the Interior and is being hard pressed by Roosevelt to take the job.” Although he foresaw correctly that Cutting would not accept the position, Collier interpreted Roosevelt’s desire to name a Progressive to the post as providing “an excellent chance, in any event, to land Ickes in the Assistant Secretaryship.” Accordingly, he notified Ickes (who by now had returned home), of this premonition, although he was not permitted “to give him some of the details, which I have from Cutting under the seal of confidence.”26 Ickes, whom Johnson may have alerted to the possibility of becoming Secretary should Cutting decline, wrote immediately to Johnson: “I may say to you that while I would love to be made Secretary of the Interior, I would be willing, as I see it now, to serve as First Assistant.”27

From January 30 to February 14 both Collier and Ickes fretted at Cutting’s indecision. A new candidate for the Indian Commissionership, “young Oscar Chapman,” Senator Costigan’s campaign manager, was introduced. Finally, the day after the “inconclusive” meeting with Frankfurter on February 5, Collier and Haven Emerson met in New York and decided to precipitate his candidacy by requesting the various regional boards of the AIDA to endorse Collier publicly and to “use their influence individually or collectively” in his behalf. Anticipating the opposition of the northern California branch, Collier argued that there was a “real possibility” that his appointment could be made and that the New York branch had already agreed to take action. If the others were ever “going to do anything, they should do it now.”28
Sometime between February 14 and February 20, Bronson Cutting formally declined Roosevelt’s offer. For Harold Ickes, even though the meaning of Cutting’s decision proved confusing for several days, the news was potentially good. For John Collier, who had anticipated the decision from the start, Cutting’s refusal coupled with his inability to persuade Roosevelt to consult Frankfurter, had created “a real danger that the entire Indian business will be relegated to the political field.”

On February 14, Raymond Moley, after consulting with Hiram Johnson, Cutting, and LaFollette, called Ickes in Chicago and requested that he come to New York as a “representative of that group [the Progressives] to sit in consultation on the general economic situation and of another on the international debt situation.” Moley also impressed upon him “the absolute necessity of keeping the whole matter strictly confidential.” Ickes, sensing that something important was underway, but uncertain as to its meaning, wrote Johnson:

Now, what I would like to have you tell me is what it is all about. As you know, and as I was careful to explain to Professor Moley, I am not an economist. He said he wasn’t either and that it was not the purpose to have an economist. . . . I am interested to know also what, if any, bearing this new development may have on my very real hope that I may be able to connect in some definite way with the Department of the Interior. From present indications a Cesarean operation will have to be performed to prevent that particular ambition from being stillborn. Am I gracefully but elegantly being offered a personal tour down a road that leads away from Washington and not to Washington?

Ickes’ confusion was not alleviated by letters he received from Collier and Johnson the following day. In reply to Johnson’s query if he had heard from Cutting, Ickes wrote: “I have not heard from Cutting. This is the fact. I still don’t know what it is all about.” Collier, who wrote to say that he had talked to Cutting about Ickes’ chances for either the Secretary’s job or the first Assistant’s position, told Ickes cryptically that “his attitude remains unchanged.” All of this, Ickes told Johnson, is “as clear to me as mud.”
Instead of proceeding directly to New York for his scheduled meeting on February 21, Ickes went first to Washington to talk with Johnson, Collier, Arthur Mullen, and others before going to Hyde Park. Exactly what he learned there will not be known until the Ickes’ papers are explored. But he did learn from Collier that Jim Farley had prepared a list of candidates for the Indian Commissioner’s position which included Collier, the Montanan Harry Mitchell, and Oscar Chapman, and that Senate Majority leader Joe Robinson of Arkansas was marshaling new strength for Meritt’s candidacy, which Collier had earlier thought was dead. He also learned that Cutting had definitely refused the Secretary’s position and that he had subsequently “taken the position that having turned down the post, he should not be active in subordinate assignments.” Collier, he learned, was almost frantic over Cutting’s decision to “remain quiescent.” Their only hope, Collier believed, was to find a way to “get the matter securely into Dr. Frankfurter’s hands.”

Ickes, true to his promise to Moley to keep silent about the nature of his journey, found himself agreeing to go to New York with Collier to meet with Meriam. Collier’s strategy was to arrange an interview with Moley, the purpose of which would be twofold: to persuade Moley to “actively seek the advice of the Senate Progressive group” with regard to all Interior appointments and “to get Moley to take the initiative in bringing Frankfurter into the picture as an advisor.” On the trip to New York, Ickes also found himself agreeing to accept the Commissionership “if that became necessary.”

As Ickes and others have recorded, Roosevelt offered him the Secretary’s job upon his arrival at Hyde Park on Tuesday, February 21, 1933. Moley, who apparently knew nothing in advance of Roosevelt’s intention, has called it “one of the most casual appointments to a Cabinet position in American history,” but both Moley and Arthur Mullen have written that Ickes was the choice of Bronson Cutting as well as of Hiram Johnson, who had previously declined the position. Indeed, on the morning of Roosevelt’s meeting with Ickes, Roosevelt received a call from Mullen saying he
had checked again with Johnson and Cutting who assured him that Ickes was the choice of the Progressive bloc and Roosevelt subsequently called Johnson who declined to accept the position himself but warmly recommended Ickes.35

The appointment of Ickes enhanced but did not ensure Collier’s appointment. Margold’s candidacy was eliminated when Ickes, in consultation with Felix Frankfurter, Louis Brandeis, and Roosevelt, decided to make him Solicitor in the Interior Department. Lewis Meriam, after support for his candidacy began to swell from rival Indian defense groups opposed to Collier, declined the honor in a letter to Ickes in which he stated that the “drive for my appointment as Indian Commissioner” was being carried out without “my consent or approval,” and stated his desire to do nothing which would “lessen the chances of the appointment of John Collier as Commissioner.” After their withdrawals, Ickes persuaded Senator Wheeler to drop his backing for Harry Mitchell and on March 23 resolved to meet the candidacy of Edgar Meritt, whose support had grown significantly, head on. On Saturday, April 1, Ickes went to Roosevelt and informed him that despite opposition to Collier from old-line Indian defense groups and despite Senator Robinson’s desire to see Arkansas’ favorite son, Edgar Meritt, appointed, he intended to recommend Collier on Monday. Roosevelt approved, and the final battle commenced.36

On Monday, April 3, Collier learned from Cutting that Hiram Johnson had overheard a conversation between McAdoo and Joe Robinson on the Senate floor, in which McAdoo had promised that he “would go right down the line with Robinson in behalf of E. B. Meritt.” Immediately Collier contacted McAdoo’s secretary who confirmed that despite his earlier promises to Dr. Haynes to support Collier, McAdoo had indeed given his endorsement to “someone else.” From Walter Woehlke, Collier learned that in mid-February McAdoo had secretly promised Oscar Howard, “one of his most profitable clients,” that he would back Howard’s brother, Everette B. Howard, an oil and gas producer and ex-Congressman from Oklahoma who was even more “unsavory” than Meritt. McAdoo’s strategy, Collier deduced, was to promote a dead-
lock between himself and Meritt so that Howard could be nominated. A few days later, Cutting learned directly from McAdoo that he would definitely not support Collier's nomination. His investigation of Collier, McAdoo said, had disclosed that Collier was unknown in California, had never registered to vote, had never taken part in Democratic politics, and was in McAdoo's words, "an emigrant and carpetbagger." 37

The effect of the Robinson-McAdoo opposition brought out all the fighting instincts in Harold Ickes, and it also aroused Senator Wheeler whose support of Collier had heretofore been lukewarm. On Tuesday, April 4, Collier worked through the night and into the next day preparing a dossier on Meritt's incompetence. Nathan Margold then "worked it over" and gave it to Ickes who met with Robinson and the President at the White House on Tuesday, April 11. 38 In a dramatic confrontation, Ickes produced the "documentary proof" against Meritt after which Roosevelt turned to Robinson with the comment: "Well, Joe, you know what I am up against. Every high brow organization in the country is opposed to Meritt, and Secretary Ickes, under whom he would have to work, doesn't want him." 39 The following day Ickes transmitted his official recommendation of Collier to Roosevelt who decided to "hold it back for a few days while Senator Robinson cools off." Ickes too thought it wise to make one last attempt to woo McAdoo's support, but when, on April 14, McAdoo still refused to accede gracefully to the appointment, Senator Wheeler, angered at McAdoo's stubbornness, which he told Collier was "simply a hold-up for patronage," called the White House and "gave this statement to President Roosevelt with vigor." Later that same afternoon the nomination was forwarded to the Senate. After an Easter recess, Collier was confirmed and sworn in on April 20.40

Would Harold Ickes have opposed Collier's quest for the Indian Commissionership had he known of Collier's opposition to his own candidacy earlier in the year? Probably not. On the same day that Ickes confronted Senator Robinson at the White House, he received a letter from an old friend, Francis C. Wilson, the Santa Fe attorney who had precipitated the split between Ickes and Collier
in 1923. Wilson wrote to denounce Collier's appointment on the ground that "He is by nature a promoter and a propagandist and not an executive or administrator. He is consistently unable to hold even-balanced views on any subject. He must be an extremist or nothing." In his reply Ickes dictated what has to be one of the most penetrating and fair-minded analyses of Collier ever made:

I think you know that I have had serious differences of opinion with John Collier, the principal one of which in the old days revolved about yourself. I do believe, however, that no one exceeds him in knowledge of Indian matters or his sympathy with the point of view of the Indians themselves. I want some one in that office who is the advocate of the Indians. The whites can take care of themselves, but the Indians need some one to protect them from exploitation. I want a man who will respect their customs and have a sympathetic point of view with reference to their culture. I want the Indians to be helped to help themselves. John Collier, with whatever faults of temperament he may have, has to a higher degree than any one available for that office, the point of view towards the Indians that I want in a Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

While conceding that there may be faults of temperament in Collier, I am persuaded that these have been over-emphasized. He has been an advocate. He has had to fight hard to convince people that the Indians are entitled to consideration. You know as well as I that many a hard-hitting lawyer, when he goes on the bench as judge, looks at things from an entirely different point of view. I believe John Collier will do the same thing. At any rate I think the experiment is worth trying.
NOTES


2. Tugwell, pp. 489-90.


5. Ickes to Hiram Johnson, Jan. 30, 1933, in Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter cited as HJP). This quotation and others that follow quoted by permission of the Director, The Bancroft Library.

6. This abbreviated account of the difficulties between Collier and Ickes is based on a mass of documents, the most pertinent of which are: Collier to Members of the Executive Committee of the American Indian Defense Association, May 21, 1923, in John Collier Papers, box 7, Yale University Library (hereafter JCP); Collier to Cash Asher, April 9, 1924, in Papers of the California League of American Indians, carton 2, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter CLAI); and Collier to John Randolph Haynes, April 1, 1932, in John Randolph Haynes Papers, American Indian Defense Association folder, Library of the University of California at Los Angeles (hereafter JRH).
7. Lewis Meriam to Collier, Aug. 5, 1932, in JCP, box 3; Collier to Emerson, Gans, Elkus, and Haynes, Sept. 4, 1932, and Collier to Gans, Sept. 13, 1932, both in JRH, Indian Affairs (2).

8. Gans to Collier, Sept. 8, 1932, and Elkus to Collier, Sept. 9, 1932, both in JCP, box 3.


11. Collier to Lewis Meriam, Nov. 4, 1932, and Collier to Nathan Margold, Nov. 4, 1932, both in CLAI, carton 5.

12. Collier to Mrs. Atwood, Nov. 10, 1932, and Collier to Lewis Meriam, Nov. 16, 1932, both in CLAI, carton 4.

13. Judson King to Haynes, Nov. 16, 1932, in JRH, Indian Affairs (3).


15. Elkus to Collier, Nov. 28, 1932, and Collier to Dear Charlie [Elkus], Dec. 1, 1932, both in JCP, box 17.


19. Collier to Haynes, Dec. 27, 1932, in JRH, Indians (John Collier). Although the memorandum to which Collier refers has not survived, it probably formed the basis for the bill to reform the Indian Service which he introduced into Congress in 1934. See U. S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Indian Affairs, Readjustment of Indian Affairs, Hearings on H.R. 7902, 73d. Cong., 2d. sess., 1934, 1-14, and U. S. Statutes at Large, 48, Part I, pp. 984-86.

20. Collier to Richard Hanna and Charles Fahy, Dec. 26, 1932, JCP, box 3; Collier to Haynes, Dec. 30, 1932, JRH, Indians (John Collier); Collier to the Governor of the Pueblo of Santo Domingo, Dec. 31, 1932; Collier to Dear ______, Jan. 1, 1933, both in JCP, box 3.

21. See correspondence in William G. McAdoo Papers, General Correspondence, Jan.-Feb. 1933, Library of Congress (hereafter WGMc); Collier bulletin to Executive Committee of the American Indian Defense Association, Jan. 13, 1933, in JRH, Indian Affairs (3); and Collier to Chairman, The All Pueblo Council, Jan. 11, 1933, courtesy of Judge Charles Fahy. See also Collier’s letter to Haynes, Jan. 20, 1933, in JRH, American Indian Defense Association, in which he noted that both Cutting...
and Hiram Johnson had now endorsed Ickes. Once it became apparent that Ickes would not be a candidate for the Indian Commissionership, but might instead become Secretary of the Interior, Collier's opinion of Ickes changed considerably. In this letter to Haynes he reported that Ickes is “likewise our candidate. He is a radical and systematic Progressive, a man of unquestioned ability and integrity. He will not take the post of Commissioner of Indian Affairs.”


23. Collier to Haynes, Feb. 9, 1933, JRH, Indian Affairs (I).

24. Haynes to Collier, Feb. 3, 1933, ibid., Indian Affairs (3).


27. Ickes to Johnson, Feb. 3, 1933, in HJP.


30. Ickes to Johnson, Feb. 14, 1933, in HJP.

31. Ibid.

32. Ickes to Johnson, Feb. 15, 1933, ibid.


35. Moley, The First New Deal, p. 95; Mullen, pp. 302-03.

36. Ickes to Frankfurter, March 14, 1933, in FFP, box 149; Meriam to Ickes, March 1, 1933, in JRH, Indian Affairs (3); Collier to Haynes, March 12, 1933, in ibid., Indians (John Collier); Collier to Haynes, March 23, 1933, in ibid., Indian Affairs (1); Collier to Haynes, April 3, 1933, in JCP, box 17.

37. Collier to Haynes, April 3, 1933 (second letter of same date) in JCP, box 17; Woehlke to Collier, Feb. 16, 1933, Collier to Margold, April 3, 1933, and Collier to Haynes, April 11, 1933, all in JRH, Indian Affairs (1); correspondence in WGMc, General Correspondence, March 22-April 17, 1933.
38. Collier to Gans, April 6, 1933, in CLAI, carton 5.
40. Collier bulletin, April 13, 1933, in JCP, box 4; Collier to Haynes, April 14, 1933, in JRH, Indians (John Collier); Collier to Haynes, April 15, 1933, in JCP, box 18.
41. Wilson to Ickes, April 11, 1933, National Archives, Record Group 48, 5-1, Pueblo, Pueblo Lands Board, part 4.
42. Ickes to Wilson, April 18, 1933, *ibid.*