

Indians Fulfill Old Prophecy

By JOHN NOVOTNEY

Washington (RNS) — A prophecy made over 100 years ago by a Sioux medicine man "came true" when several thousand Indians converged on Washington for the first-ever "Trail of Broken Treaties Native American Assembly," highlighted by a takeover of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building here.

Robert Burnette, a Sioux Indian from Mission, S.D., who is chairman of the assembly, told of the prophecy dealing with the significance of religion in the convening of the assembly and in the lives of the native Indians in this country.

The prophecy by the long-deceased Sioux medicine man was that Indians would gather into caravans on the West Coast, travel across the country and meet with the nation's leaders on the East Coast. Thereafter, the leaders and non-Indian citizens of the country would understand, and presumably for that reason do something about the Indians' problems, Mr. Burnette said.

This summer, while on a three-day fast and "vision quest," Leonard Crow Dog, a Sioux medicine man from Rosebud, S.D., reportedly had a vision indicating this was the time for the Indians to begin their trek to the nation's center of power.

Preparations for it began July 27 following a sundance ceremony. Three caravans of about 1,000 Indians formed at Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles and headed east Oct. 6, arriving in Washington Nov. 2-3.

"We're fighting for the control of our own destiny," he said. "We've been puppets of puppets (of the white man) long enough."

"We are demanding that the federal government change the whole Indian set-up and get us out of the Department of Interior. We're tired of being treated as natural resources, such as the soil, trees and mountains."

The Indians' demands were spelled out in a 20-point program and some "very stiff position papers," which they are seeking to present to appropriate government officials. Some of the more significant points include:

- "Establishment of a federal Indian commission, a new agency, directly answerable to the President, and abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs"

- "Consolidation of Indians' land, water and natural and economic resources."

- "Complete renunciation of the 1953 termination policy (TP) (passed by Congress) under which Indians lost federal services guaranteed to them by treaty."

- "Mandatory relief against treaty rights violations."

To dramatize how seriously they view their demands, about 900 Indians occupied the six-story Bureau of Indian Affairs building, causing damage estimated by the bureau at \$2 million.

The six-day occupation ended last Wednesday, and the Indians went home, at government expense and with assurances that the government would study their case.

Bradford Patterson, a White House aide, spent several hours listening and talking to the Indians at the Bureau of Indian Affairs during their takeover, and Mr. Burnette said "we're very encouraged," following this meeting—the first time, he said, this has ever happened.

Mr. Burnette said it is a "primarily religious controlled movement because we haven't made a move before our medicine men gave their blessing and offered spiritual guidance."

If the assembly were political, "we would have left our medicine men home," he said. Four medicine men accompanied the 1,000 who traversed the country from the West Coast. Normally,

the ratio of medicine men to people in the average tribe is one for every 5,000.

"Christian churches have hurt us very deeply (in the past) in trying to convert us," Mr. Burnette said. Misunderstanding the Indians' religion, with its profound respect for the earth and its resources, Christian missionaries have "called us pagans" and branded "our ceremonies as the work of the devil. They have misinterpreted completely what we are," he charged.

While the Indians have never tried converting the white man to their religion, Mr. Burnette said Indians today feel the "Great Spirit has given us a message which they (white men) would do well to respect too: that no one owns anything, especially the earth, and that man was put here to help his fellow man and act as closely as possible in concert with nature and God . . ."

"Everything should be used very solemnly," he said, explaining that that means "carefully and not wastefully."

"The white man today is using the resources of the earth for political and/or financial expediency, and not looking out for his own future or that of his children," he charged.

Mr. Burnette made frequent reference to the important role the medicine man plays in the lives of the Indians. The chief of a tribe often is also its medicine man, he said, adding that chiefs Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse were both medicine men.

Asked whether the medicine

man performed a function similar to that of a clergyman in a Christian community, Mr. Burnette stated emphatically that there is nothing comparable in the Christian religion to the medicine man. A clergyman is charged with the spiritual care of his "flock," he said, but the medicine man is responsible for maintaining the "moral and religious fibre" of the tribe.

The medicine man is the "keeper of the tribe, he's the cohesive force which holds it together," and as such he is "very,

very important to all tribes," Mr. Burnette said.

He conceded that at least in this latter aspect the function is similar to that of the Pope in the Catholic Church.

A president of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota from 1954-62, Mr. Burnette currently is chairman of "American Indians and Friends" which, he said, is "dedicated to protecting Indians legally in and out of court and to help young Indians obtain law degrees."



Washington — American Indians guard the entrance to the Bureau of Indian Affairs building with an assortment of make-shift weapons during takeover of the offices which brought several thousand Indians to the nation's capital. (RNS)

Seen 'Highly Encouraging'

Supreme Court Decision To Hear Aid Case Praised

Albany — "Highly encouraging" was the way a Catholic spokesman in Albany described the decision announced last week by the U.S. Supreme Court that it would hear an appeal in the Mandated Services Case.

"This means," said Charles J. Tobin, state Catholic Committee chairman, "that the Supreme Court considers the State Mandated Services system of aiding nonpublic school students and their parents sufficiently different from other systems of aid to require a court hearing at the highest level in Washington."

At issue is the law passed by the State legislature in 1970 which provided assistance to nonpublic schools for services

required of them by the State in particular, attendance keeping and certain examinations. Payments of a similar nature had been made to nonpublic schools going back to the last century.

Payments under the 1970 law were made for 1970-71 school year. In April of this year a three-judge federal court voted in a split decision to declare the law unconstitutional. The court also halted the last half of the 1972 payment.

In recent decisions the Supreme Court has set certain guidelines for aid to nonpublic school students and their parents, most notably the Lemon case which declared the Pennsylvania aid unconstitutional. That was followed this year with

a refusal to hear an appeal in the aid to nonpublic school case in Ohio. Both decisions were 8 to 1 according to court records.

Since the court has accepted an appeal in the New York Mandated Services case, that means "at least four of the judges want to hear the arguments from both sides in Washington," Tobin said. The Supreme Court, he explained, hears cases only when four or more of the nine judges express the willingness to do so. Otherwise, the lower court decision stands.

"So we are encouraged by the fact that the Mandated Services case is viewed as different from any other aid case to reach the Supreme Court to date," Tobin concluded.

Abortion Loses (2-1) in Michigan And (3-1) in North Dakota

Detroit (RNS) — Michigan's voters, by an almost 2-to-1 margin, voted the state's abortion issue right back into the hands of the Michigan Supreme Court by rejecting a "citizens' initiative" (Proposition B) aimed at liberalizing the state's 126-year-old abortion law.

(A similar initiative calling for the liberalization of North Dakota's abortion law was overwhelmingly defeated by a 3-to-1 margin in what was described as a "completely ecumenical effort." With 77 per cent of the vote tabulated, 138,180 voted against abortion reform while 45,736 voted for the initiative.)

A heated and controversial Courier-Journal

campaign against changing the Michigan law — led by Roman Catholic elements throughout the state — was credited as being the major factor in the defeat of the proposition.

Just prior to the election (Nov. 7), Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit acted upon a suggestion from his archdiocesan Priests' Senate and called for a day of fasting and prayer "as a sacrificial offering asking God's help and light . . ."

Partial returns Nov. 8 indicated that the proposal to reform the Michigan abortion law had been defeated, almost 2 to 1. The proposed law would have allowed

abortions for any reason up to the 20th week of pregnancy in a state-approved facility by a licensed physician.

The current law, which is being contested in the Michigan Supreme Court on appeal from a lower court, permits abortion only when the life of the mother is in danger.

While Catholics spearheaded the anti-abortion campaign in Michigan, certain Protestants and others also objected to the liberalized proposition. Among these were some American Baptists, members of the Reformed Church, Southern Baptists, and the Black Baptist Ministerial Council in Detroit.

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