

WHY WOUNDED KNEE?

By FR. WILLIAM O'CONNELL

Rapid City, S.D. (RNS) — In January two people met violent deaths in the Black Hills here.

One was a young Indian killed in an early morning brawl in a place called Buffalo Gap. The other was a widow murdered on a rural mountain road.

The suspect in the first case is a white man from Custer; the suspect in the second case is an Indian from Rapid City.

In the first, the white was released on bond; in the second, the Indian had no bond hearing for more than a month and is still in jail because he can't raise a bond. It was these two cases that instigated a civil rights hearing in Rapid City in February, sponsored by the American Indian Movement (AIM).

And it was these hearings that ultimately resulted in the chain of events that led to the present seizure of Wounded Knee by AIM.

Some antagonism arose against the hearings, and there was much debate as to the place for such a hearing. Finally, they were held in the city auditorium, National Guard Armory and the Catholic Indian Center in Rapid City.

A group of AIM members from throughout the Midwest area converged on Rapid City for the hearing and took up residence in the Mother Butler Center, a social center for Indians. At peak force, the numbers swelled to 200.

Father William J. O'Connell, since February the head of the communication and social action agency of the Rapid City Catholic diocese, was formerly chancellor of the see.

Despite the fact of the hearings, there was very little recognition or participation by the white community. While many allegations of discrimination came up, no real solutions were offered.

On Feb. 6, AIM went to Custer to demand that the white suspect in the Buffalo Gap case be charged with murder, rather than manslaughter. This was the scene of the first violence — the courthouse fire, burning of the Chamber of Commerce building, and a gas station.

Those arrested were brought to the Pennington County Jail in Rapid City. Those who weren't arrested went back to the Mother Butler Center. The next day, the city's racial conciliation committee held an open meeting in the city auditorium to hear the charges of discrimination and to listen to the grievances of the local community. After this meeting, the committee began the first of the steps of the negotiations with leaders of AIM.

Despite the violence, I personally believe that the AIM charges are real and true; there's no doubt about it. And these issues have to be faced.

During the days that followed, AIM waged an effective battle of "psychological warfare" and harassment against the Rapid City community. This led to a

late night riot when several of the main street bars were destroyed.

Despite this, negotiations and talks went on. And out of them all that was established was an elected group of 15 leaders of the local Indian community and five pastors of the local ministerial association.

This group is now recognized by all to hear the problems of the Indian community. The ministerial group included clergymen of the Roman Catholic, United Methodist, American Lutheran, Open Bible, and Evangelical Churches.

While all this is going on here, this same psychological battle is being waged against the tribal council at Pine Ridge. Charges were brought against the tribal president, Richard (Dick) Wilson.

Indian politics are like ours, representing great rivalries and bitterness. There was a call for Wilson's impeachment. A trial was held and he was cleared of the charges — misappropriation of funds, running a "police state."

On Feb. 27, the AIM leader Russell Means was beaten up at Pine Ridge. This is why the AIM went to Pine Ridge and took over the town of Wounded Knee. The hamlet is also the Indian symbol of what white America did to the Indian nation.

The main demand of AIM is that Sen. Fulbright conduct a foreign affairs hearing to investigate the U.S. violations of Indian treaties. The treaties were great but never implemented.

We must try to understand what has happened to the American Indians, who were placed on reservations, made wards of the state, for so long deprived of full citizenship.

Federal statistics show that the life expectancy of the average Indian is 44. He has the highest rate of suicide, highest level of poverty, highest level of minority group unemployment.

Putting AIM leaders in jail or saying they are radical won't cause them "to go away."

The days of the cigar-store Indian or the rodeo-circus performer are gone. The time of Indian justice is here.

Pope to Hear Kearney Band

The Bishop Kearney High School band will play for Pope Paul next week in Rome, after their fifth annual parade performance in Dublin.

The 90 marching band members, with their baton twirlers and majorettes and 130 parents leave Rochester tomorrow for 10 days in Ireland and Italy.

When the Kearney Marching Kings joined the parade in 1969, they were the first American group to do so. This year, there will be 12 American bands, according to Raymond Shahin, Kearney band director.

Lenten Series At St. Ambrose

St. Ambrose Parish is conducting a Lenten Renewal Series over the next three Mondays, 8:15 p.m.

On March 19, Father David Callan, chaplain at Cornell University, will speak on "Basic Catholic Beliefs" in Dailey Hall.

On March 26, Father Thomas Bales, director of the theology department at Aquinas Institute, will talk on "The Believing and Worshipping Church," in Dailey Hall.

On April 2, Father Anthony Valente, chaplain at Mercy High School, will speak on "The Listening and Serving Church" in St. Ambrose Church.

The three sessions require no registration and no fees. All adults and young adults are invited.

Wednesday, March 14, 1973

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73



Sister Jose speaks to workshop participants.

Sister Jose Hobday Speaks at Workshop

Watson Homestead — More than 180 persons attended a two-day seminar on Personal Renewal conducted by Sister Jose Hobday here recently.

The two-day affair included three lectures on various subjects dealing with personal renewal.

Sister Jose is known throughout the world for her work with minority groups and with inmates. She currently resides on an Indian reservation in Mon-

tana. She is also involved in the Indian cultural program at the University of California at Los Angeles.

The special program was under the sponsorship of the Christian Formation Board.

Individuals from throughout the diocese attended the sessions which was held in the peaceful setting of Watson Homestead, a retreat like facility.

New Christy Minstrels At Notre Dame Show

Elmira — The New Christy Minstrels will be the featured performers at the fourth annual Benefit Concert for Notre Dame High School.

The popular singing group will appear here March 27 for both matinee and evening performances in the Notre Dame Auditorium just prior to leaving the country on a European tour.

The special matinee performance will be held for students

and senior citizens. The group is composed of eight members and owes its long popularity to its unusual appeal to all age groups.

Mr. and Mrs. Matt Fennell are co-chairmen of the event.

Admission is by reservation only. The tickets may be obtained by calling the Fennells at (607) 733-3141 or Notre Dame Development Office at (607) 734-2423.