

“We are an honorable people - can you say the same?” (1973)

The Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy stands in support of our brothers at Wounded Knee. We find it deplorable that the Native Americans have to risk their very lives to focus attention on the terrible conditions of our people in this country. We cite the poor health conditions, education, welfare, illegal drafting of our people, and the utter disregard for the treaties that we have paid for with our lives as examples of these conditions.

The issues are national and international—the honor and credibility of the United States is at stake. You should be concerned. All of the people of the United States should be concerned. The President of the United States should be concerned, and further, he should make a statement to that effect. Native Americans should be the top priority of this nation. We number less than 1 percent of this country's population: now why is it so hard to take care of the obligations to our people that have been promised and promised and promised.

The people at Wounded Knee are making a statement. The question is not what damage or destruction of property has occurred, but why it becomes necessary for our people to have to resort to such extremes to gain some recognition of our desperate situation.

We are a free people. The very dust of our ancestors is steeped in our tradition. This is the greatest gift we gave to you, the concept of freedom. You did not have this. Now that you have taken it and built a constitution and country around it, you deny freedom to us. There must be someone among you who is concerned for us, and if not for us, at least for the honor of your country. In 1976, you are going to have a birthday party proclaiming 200 years of democracy, a hypocritical action. The people of the world would find this laughable.

The solution is simple: be honest, be fair, honor the commitments made by the founding fathers of your country. We are an honorable people—can you say the same? You are concerned for the destruction of property at the BIA building and at Wounded Knee. Where is your concern for the destruction of our people, for human lives? Thousands of Pequots, Narragansetts, Mohicans, thousands of Cherokees on the Trail of Tears, Black Hawk's people, Chief Joseph's people, Captain Jack's people, the Navajos, the Apaches, Sand Creek Massacre (huddled under an American flag seeking the protection of a promise), Big Foot's people at Wounded Knee. When will you cease your violence against our people? Where is your concern for us?

What about the destruction of our properties? The thousands of acres of land, inundated by dams built on our properties, the raping of the Hopi and Navajo territories by the Peabody strip mining operations, timber cutting, power companies, water pollution, and on and on. Where is your concern for these properties?

The balance of the ledger is up to you. Compare the property damage of the BIA and Wounded Knee against the terrible record and tell us that we are wrong for wanting redress. We ask for justice, and not from the muzzle of an M-16 rifle. Now what is to occur?

Remove the marshals and the FBI men. They are hostile, and eager to exercise the sanctions of the United States to subjugate the Indian people.

Do not prosecute the Indians for the methods used to gain your attention, for the fault actually lies with the Government of the United States for ignoring Indians for so long.

Put your energies and money now being expended for the suppression of Indian people at Wounded Knee into a real effort to understand why they are there. And begin here in the capitol through an investigation of the BIA, and of the government policies dealing with our most urgent needs.

Reaffirm and respect the treaties entered into between our two peoples.

Put your house in order with respect to our people, so that we may continue to coexist in peace and friendship as our grandfathers and their grandfathers tried so hard to do.

Show us you are sincere and remember the Creator loves all life and peoples and favors none above the other.

We have not asked you to give up your religions and beliefs for ours. We have not asked you to give up your language for ours.

We have not asked you to give up your ways of life for ours.

We have not asked you to give up your government for ours.

We have not asked that you give up your territories to us.

Why can you not accord us the same respect? For your children learn from watching their elders, and if you want your children to do what is right, then it is up to you to set the example.

That is all that we have to say at this moment. Onen.