



The following article appeared in The New York Times, March 30, 1973 and was sent to Tekawennake by Miss Barbara Graymont, Nyack University, N.Y., who thought it would interest readers of Tekawennake.

ISSUE AT WOUNDED KNEE

To the Editor:

I was pretty surprised to read what our old friend Vine Deloria, Jr. had to say about me in his March 22 letter to the editor. I was especially surprised because Vine and I both condemned the destruction by AIM of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' offices at Washington. In fact, some people think that it was because I spoke out against AIM's tactics in Washington that the AIM people have asked the Federal Government to abolish our Oglala Sioux tribal government.

Vine says that I am "kept in power through the use of terror squads which appear to be paid with 'Federal monies.'" This statement is false. After AIM announced plans to take over our reservation, and my life was threatened, and before Federal marshals were sent to our reservation, the Federal Government did deputize a number of Oglala Sioux Indians to guard our tribal government buildings as well as Federal property. We were (and are) determined that there will not be another "Washington" at Pine Ridge.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe under my administration has not "used violence against its own members to maintain power." The opposite is true. Several of our tribal councilmen who oppose AIM have, in fact, been attacked by unknown outsiders.

I simply cannot understand why a man who knows the South Dakota reservations as well as Vine does would repeat these false rumours without checking out the truth. Whatever differences people may have in tribal politics, truth is truth, and it does not do Indian people any good for respected Indian spokesmen to go around the country bearing false witness against the elected officers of Indian tribes.

Just for the record, I was elected tribal president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe by a vote of 1,554 for me and 1,130 for my opponent. My two-year term is up next year, so that the Oglala Sioux will soon have a chance to vote me and my administration up or down.

The issue at Wounded Knee is whether we are going to have a representative democracy at Pine Ridge or whether we are going to be run by self-appointed saviors with guns.

There is "terror" at Pine Ridge today, but it is not coming from me or from our Indian police officers.

We have now been waiting two weeks for the Federal Government to carry out its responsibility to protect the lives and property of the Oglala Sioux people. I have urged my own people to use restraint, but the Oglala Sioux government has the power and responsibility "to protect the health and general welfare of the tribe," and we have criminal jurisdiction of Indians on our reservation.

Unless we receive the protection we need in this emergency from the United States, the time is coming when we are going to have to exercise that power and fulfill that responsibility.

Dick Wilson
(President of the Oglala Sioux)
Pine Ridge, S.D., March 22, 1973
