

Little Big Man at Wounded Knee

WINNIPEG (CUP) -- The power structure in America, intent on maintaining the status quo, has gone to extremes in its attempts to muffle dissent. Rather than dispatching an assassin to waste radical leaders, they have, through illegitimate use of the courts, sought to eliminate radical movements.

These charges were part of an always eloquent, sometimes scathing presentation by radical American lawyer, William Kunstler, to a crowd of 600 at the University of Manitoba recently.

Kunstler has defended such figures as Angela Davis, the Chicago Seven, Daniel Berrigan, and most recently, the participants in the occupation of Wounded Knee.

Kunstler conceives the purpose of the "show trials" to be threefold: to imprison leaders, to terrorize followers, and to solidify public opinion behind the power structure through the legitimizing feature of the courts.

Drawing a parallel between modern-day activists and Christ, Kunstler demonstrated that the legal system has changed very little in twenty centuries, still using trumped up charges, false evidence and perjuring witnesses.

Deceit and perjury, Kunstler contended, are the modus operandi of this corrupt and decadent power structure. He cited examples of Presidential fabrication from Eisenhower through Ford.

Kunstler suggested that his most recent clients, the American Indian Movement (AIM) faced court charges because they had challenged the status quo. Their acquittal was due to the prosecution's false case. The prosecution had tampered with witnesses and refused to allow the jury to decide the case Kunstler said. This would have forced another trial tying up the defendants even longer without convicting them.

Kunstler was deeply moved by his association with AIM. He saw a nation robbed of its pride and the spiritualism of its ancestors, rise up at Wounded Knee with a willingness to die for a principle.

The court victory, Kunstler feels, has produced a glimmer of hope for AIM and all people of principal. This victory is still the exception according to Kunstler.



The lawyer then referred his audience to the words of a Sioux Holy Man, Black Elk, who had witnessed the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. These words he said, are still the rule for the Indian and possibly all men: "I did not know then how

much was ended. When I look back from the hill of my old age I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see something else

died there in the bloody mud and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream...the nation's hope is broken and scattered. There is no centre any longer and the sacred tree is dead."



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