

WARRIOR(Cont.)

had happened yesterday. Even the fog of alcohol cannot dim that part of your life.

The drums have stopped and you grow silent. I open my eyes and look at you in wonder. I touch your shoulder, convincing myself that you are real and not a dream. Then pointing to the dancers I tell you "You should not be sitting here. It is out there that you belong. Dressed in the tradition of your people, "You shake your head sadly. "But you must," I implore, "Your heart, your soul are out there, in that circle." You turn and look at me full now. The painful expression in your eyes is something beyond the description of words.

The drums have started again, your body picking up the rhythm, your voice sounding sad: "I have been out there, taking home many honors, that is past now. Now I can only watch the others. They must dance for me. Those drums, they are my religion, they speak the words of my heart." As you turn away from me, I understand what it is you are telling me. You do not join the dancers, because you are a drunk and you are ashamed. You have betrayed and dishonored your body with alcohol. But you will not dishonor the sacred circle and the sound of those drums, the tradition of your people.

So long ago, you cried for your first dead enemy. Now it is my heart that cries for you, a brave warrior, who fought with such courage. You won the battle you fought far away from home but you lost your battle with alcohol and let it defeat you.

I walk outside into the dark, away from the crowd. I inhale the cool air of the evening and look at the stars that have been shining on many generations and witnessed many battles, in victory and defeat. With the sound of the drums still in my heart, I say, "Oh, Great Spirit, give this old warrior the strength to win just one more war. Let him defeat alcohol, let him count coup over the bottle. Let him be strong and proud once more, so he can join the dancers in the circle where he belongs.

-Courtesy of the Spilyay Tymoo



MEANS PROTESTS COLUMBUS EXHIBIT

GAINESVILLE, FLA. -- (NANS) American Indians, led by former American Indian Movement leader Russell Means, protested a museum exhibit on Christopher Columbus here, denouncing it as racist and sexist.

The display on Spanish exploration is scheduled to travel to other parts of the country, but Indian protesters hope to have it stopped.

They began camping outside the Florida Museum of Natural History Dec. 7 to protest the exhibit, titled "First Encounters: Spanish Exploration in America."

The protesters said a statue of an Indian man and a topless Indian woman were insulting, sexist and racist. But exhibit organizer Jerry Milanich described the display as "the way it was."

Means threatened to get a court injunction to stop the exhibit if the protesters are unable to do so.

-Courtesy of the Native American News Service

CONGRESS MULLS OVER INDIAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

INDIAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM:

There are now three separate bills before Congress which would amend the "American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978" (AIRFA). This legislation, which has been a high priority for FCNL, was introduced partly in response to recent court cases which did not uphold Indian religious rights. The most recent such case was the 1988 Supreme Court decision *Lyng*, in which the court held that even though the federal government's construction of a logging road would destroy Indian sacred sites, the tribes could not receive protection from exercising their religious practices, or punished for such practices.

Action came first on the House side. House Interior Committee Chairman Udall AZ introduced H.R. 1546, which would amend AIRFA to provide that, absent a compelling federal interest, federal lands that have been used historically by a traditional Indian religion shall not be managed in a way that will "pose a substantial and realistic threat" to frustrate Native religious practices. FCNL supported this legislation.

Then the ranking minority member of the Indian Affairs Committee, Sen. McCain AZ, introduced S. 1124. This would prohibit federal agency actions that would "undermine or frustrate" Indian religious traditions; if those actions meet certain criteria, they would be exempt from the act. At a hearing on S. 1124, tribal witnesses expressed concern that with the exemptions, the bill would really not insure protection for sacred sites.

On November 21, the last day of the first session, Indian Affairs Committee Chairman Sen. Inouye HI introduced S. 1979. The bill would, among other things, provide that federal agencies enter into consultation and cooperation agreements with Native American traditional or governmental leaders in cases where agency actions adversely affect Native religious practices. During the time of the agreement, any adverse land management activities would be required to cease.

FCNL will watch closely as Congress continues consideration of these various approaches to amend the "American Indian Religious Freedom Act" during the second session.

On November 17, the Special Committee on Investigations released its final report and legislative recommendations. While tribal leaders are still reviewing this report, it is likely that some of its recommendations may influence the Indian affairs agenda in the second session. Entitled, "A New Federalism for American Indians," the report calls for "a new era of negotiated agreements between Indian tribes and the United States." It proposes to end the government's "stifling bureaucratic presence in Indian country" by bringing tribal governments in to the federalist system.

Under these proposed negotiated agreements, all federal resources, functions and programs, fully-funded, as well as the physical assets and land of federal agencies, would be transferred to the tribes. The federal government will agree to provide each tribe with an annual "Tribal Self-Governance Grant," which would equal that tribe's fair share of the current federal Indian budget, based on 1989 population. A Self-Governance Grant would be a permanent entitlement with an annual cost-of-living allowance. Each tribal government would assess its own communities' needs, set priorities, and design budgets to address those priorities, as state governments do.

The report proposes the creation of an Office of Federal-Tribal Relations (OFTR) within the Executive

Office of the President, which will negotiate new agreements and oversee their implementation. Agreements would be signed by the tribal chairman or tribal representative and the President, and ratified by the House and Senate. By signing an agreement with the United States, the tribe will promise to operate in accordance with a written constitution, and adhere to comprehensive federal laws prohibiting corruption and guaranteeing fair elections.

- Courtesy of the Friends Committee on National Legislation



TRIBES REACT TO COMMITTEE PROPOSAL

Tribal officials are registering mixed reactions to a recent proposal that tribes be given the autonomy to run their own programs.

Lawmakers in Washington say they will hold extensive hearings this year on the Senate Select Committee's recommendations for sweeping changes in Indian programs.

In November, the special investigative committee of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs released a report suggesting that tribes be allowed to govern themselves if they are willing to meet certain conditions of the federal government.

The committee proposed that tribes be allowed to participate in a new system of "self-government" grants which would be made to each tribe on the basis of its population.

The agreements would be voluntary and contingent on the creation of new governments approved by a majority of each tribe.

The tribes would have to adopt constitutions that would ensure that Indian leaders are held accountable for the funds they handle.

So far, tribes have been cautious about offering full-hearted endorsements of the committee's recommendations.

"Some (tribes) can handle it (autonomy)," said Gerald Anton, president of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. "Others are small and don't have the capability to administer large amounts of money and programs (that need to meet the federal guidelines)."

Three prominent tribal chairmen, Roger Jourdain of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa, Arthur Gahbow, Chairman of the Mille Lacs Band and Wendell Chino, president of the Mescalero Apache tribe in New Mexico issued a joint statement.

They commended the committee for documenting examples of the federal government's mismanagement of Indian programs, but criticized the committee's recommendations as being both naive and shortsighted.

"While these recommendations at first appear to be intriguing," the chairmen said, "we fear that their implementation will result in the termination of the federal trust relationship as we know it."

"In theory, what the Congress says its doing is giving the tribes more flexibility, but in reality it is eliminating much of the government's responsibility to protect Indian tribes," the statement said.

- Courtesy of the American Indian Report