

Dino Butler/Peltier Host Anti-war Conference

ANTI-WAR continued
from front page

cated — to hold a conversation.

The day long convention, "Custer Wants You... Again/Native Perspectives on War & Militarism," was four months in development. Grand Ronde Tribal member Klairice A. Westley joined with Veterans For Peace member Ted Kiser and activist and mom Shelly Cater to bring some peaceful perspectives to the community, and some resources to their children.

"I have two boys that are draft age," said Westley. "We're not giving our young people the information (they need) to prevent them from enlisting," she said.

She hoped that this event would close that gap.

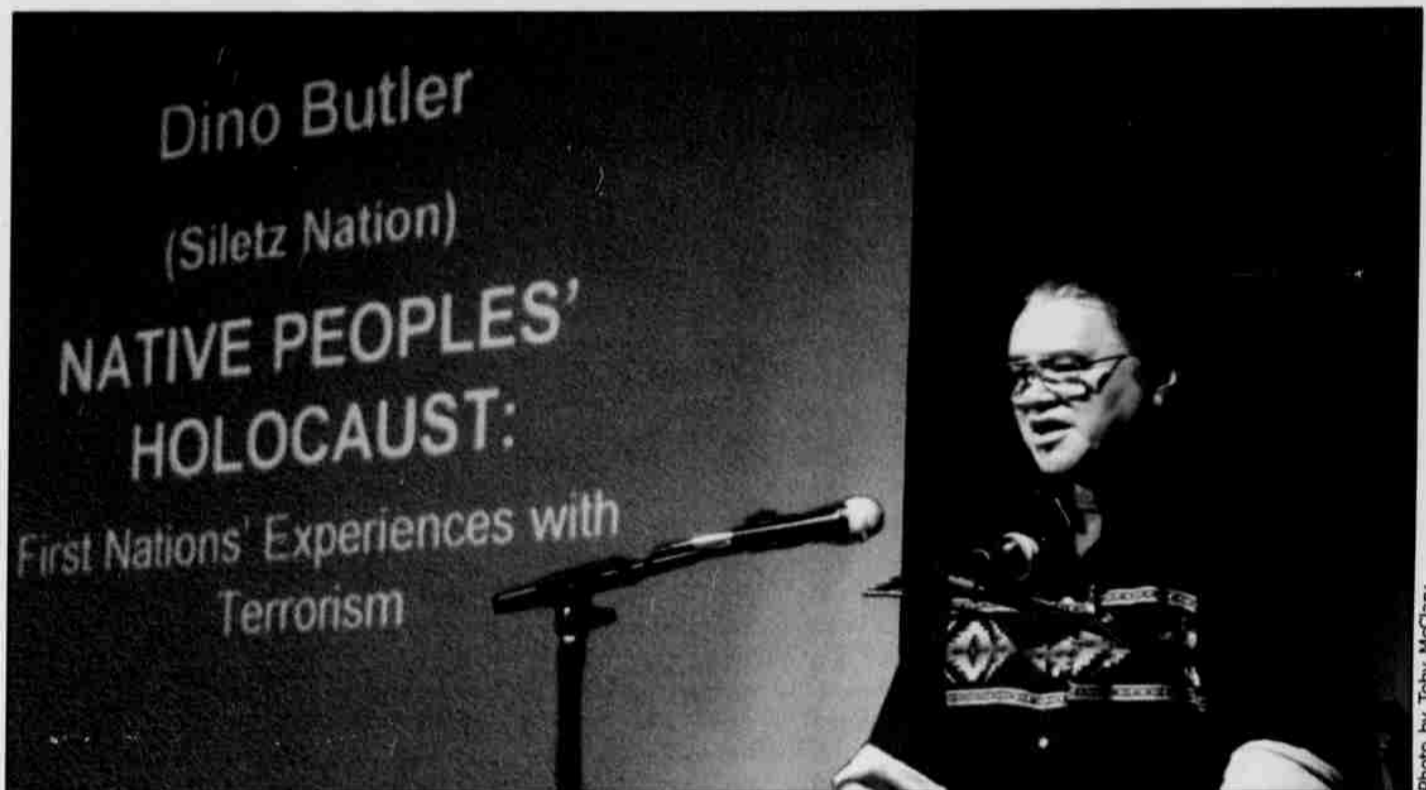
On hand were representatives of the National Lawyers Guild describing GIs' rights and military recruiters' wrongs; Veterans for Peace came with a range of personal perspectives not generally seen in prime time; a relatively new group, Students for Peace and Justice, run by Lincoln High School juniors Rosa Lehman and Lila Zucker was there as was the Northwest Anarchist Federation and the Portland Youth and Elders Council.

KBOO Reporter and Public Affairs Host Andrew Geller tied the war in Iraq to an unbroken string of U.S. aggressions going back 100 years. "The U.S. has sent troops into foreign lands every nine-and-a-half months for over a century," he said.

Geller also brought to bear such observations about war as Nazi Hermann Göring's famous description of how leaders take a country to war:

"Voice or no voice," Göring said, "the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country." (The quote comes from Gustave Gilbert's book, *Nuremberg Diary*).

Geller quoted Major General Smedley Butler, USMC, who said in 1933, "I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the



Host — Siletz Tribal member Dino Butler introduced an anti-war conference hosted and organized by Grand Ronde Tribal member Klairice A. Westley in Portland, Oregon earlier this year. At the conference, Butler presented a letter from Leonard Peltier.

benefits of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912 ('Where have I heard that name before?' said Geller). I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China, I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested."

"ink pen," and Peltier ran down the list of anti-Indian laws that continue as "another act of genocide."

Butler called it "a genocide of the mind."

Butler has been a key figure in the struggle for Native rights since the early 1970s. He was with Peltier on June 26, 1975, during the FBI attack on the Pine Ridge Reservation in

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~ Eugene Johnson
Siletz Tribal Member

The "Brown Brothers" he mentions are the same Browns whose name is today the centerpiece of the Halliburton subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown and Root, busy this time with the war in Iraq, said Geller.

But the biggest names at the event were Leonard Peltier and Dino Butler (Siletz). Peltier sent a hand-written welcome to the group, and Butler read it.

About the continuing Indian wars against our nations, Peltier wrote: "These wars are not over." Today, however, the weapon of choice is the

Oglala, South Dakota. Butler and fellow AIM member Bob Robideau were tried and acquitted for the murders of two FBI agents in a 1976 Cedar Rapids courtroom. Peltier was convicted in 1977, in a Fargo, North Dakota courtroom of complicity in the murders and is now in year 29 of two life sentences.

"In the 1970s," Peltier wrote, "we decided we would resist the war (on the Indians) — the longest war in history — instead of lying down like a whipped dog with his tail between his legs. I have never surrendered, nor do I intend to."

"Teach yourselves to be leaders," he wrote. "If you learn to speak to our people, they will listen to you."

Butler compared the war in Iraq with the one in Vietnam. "You can't win this war," he said. "(The people have their own) way of life. You can't take away a way of life."

"Our minds are poisoned with hate and bitterness," he said. "Hate will destroy us. In 1975, I wanted nothing more than to kill or be killed. I felt I had nothing to live for. That's a genocide of our minds and our hearts. Our young people are made to feel helpless. All they see is war waged all around us. (They think), what can I do? You can do something and it starts within yourself. My church is right here (he patted his chest), right here inside of me."

"Our power comes from our ancestors who suffered," he said.

"Each and every one of us has to make a decision about who we are and where we're going. And that moment

is now."

"Today, I don't hate the white man or the U.S. government because they can't hurt me anymore."

"Go within your dreams," he said. "You just have to listen."

Others were taking no prisoners.

"If you're thinking of joining the military, don't give me that warrior (expletive)! Please!" said Eugene Johnson. "Warriors aren't killers! Warriors are people who stand up for the rights, health, happiness, joy, pleasure, life, death and generosity of the people. Yet, somehow, we narrowed the focus of what a warrior is. A warrior is defined as someone who joins the military and kills their fellow human beings? (Expletive) brave! Pulling a gun out and murdering your fellow human beings to secure the wealth of billionaires."

"I never signed up for the draft, let alone the military," Johnson added. "Why would I want to fight for the same people that have tried and continue to attempt to wipe Indians off of the face of the earth? I don't and I won't, of course."

"Did you ever notice that when the U.S. goes to war, it attacks people of color?" asked Tribal member Perri McDaniel, who did not attend but followed the development of the convention, "and who do they recruit to go on the front lines? More people of color. When are we going to get it?"

With videos that included Martin Luther King, Jr. and Joseph Kennedy, Jr., and bits of other videos including, "Genocide by Sanctions," "Arlington West," "Testimonies Out of Fallujah" and "What I've Learned About U.S. Foreign Policy," the conference connected many of the dots in a history that is largely ignored or forgotten by much of the press and the public.

Leroy Big Boy (Oglala Lakota), a drug and alcohol counselor for the Native American Rehabilitation Association, talked about post-war alcohol and drug use on reservations. Performance Artist Queksta (Secwepemc/Okanagan) read one of her poems, a letter to Peltier. Annette and Mark Pritchard of Military Families Speak Out, remembered their nephew, who died in Iraq.

"When you leave here," said Peltier through Butler's voice, "don't forget what you've learned." ■



Peaceful — Grand Ronde Tribal member Klairice A. Westley of Portland joined with others to host the first Indian conference in the area against the war in Iraq.