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The occupation of Wounded Knee : press coverage of the American Indian Movement

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**THE OCCUPATION OF WOUNDED KNEE:
PRESS COVERAGE OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Miranda J. Brady

May 2003

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ABSTRACT

THE OCCUPATION OF WOUNDED KNEE PRESS COVERAGE OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT

by Miranda J. Brady

This thesis analyzes methods used by American press institutions to address Civil Rights activity within a sub-group of activists. It uses historical analysis to examine press reports of the Occupation of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement (AIM) from March 27-May 8, 1973. Coverage from national, mid-western, and Native American newspapers is compared for triangulation. Historical documents and Agenda Building and Framing theories are examined. This thesis is important because of the profound impact that the press has in shaping national attitudes about significant Civil Rights issues.

Initial coverage sympathized with AIM, though press favor faded. Press agents grew impatient with news blackouts and the lack of “newsworthy” material. Polls also indicated diminishing public support. Though early reports received front-page attention, only subsequent updates including injury or death found prominent placement. Frequency and placement improved at the event’s conclusion. Final reports were laced with resentment toward the costly occupation.

In memory of Dr. Alan Fried, a dedicated mentor and friend. Thank you for your guidance and unyielding faith in me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

AIM and the Occupation of Wounded Knee

The twentieth century meant revolution and upheaval of racial norms and perceptions in America, largely due to the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. One can hardly imagine what contemporary society would be like, if the US had somehow skipped that chapter in its history, or if the press had not acted as the main agenda builder of information about Civil Rights events as they occurred. As the “window to the world,” the collective press also acted as opinion-leader and framer of all that was reported. This thesis examines the press’ role in shaping America’s perception of specific events within the Civil Rights movements and further implications for the country today.

This study is a historical analysis of news reporting during the Occupation of Wounded Knee from March 27-May 8, 1973, during height of the American Indian Movement (AIM) from 1972-1976. This study will analyze coverage in the prestigious, general interest press such as *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times* and mid-western newspapers such as *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *The Saint Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*, *The Kansas City Star*, *The Des Moines Register*, *The Wichita Eagle*, *The Milwaukee Journal*, *The Minneapolis Tribune*, *The Sioux Falls Argus Leader*, *The Omaha World Herald*, and *The Denver Post*. In addition, national and mid-western coverage will be compared to national Native

American newspapers, including, *The Akwesasne Notes* and *Wassaja*. The Native American newspapers reviewed claimed the largest quarterly, national circulation in 1973. For further background, government documents will be examined, including the “Occupation of Wounded Knee Hearings before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs” (Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, 1986) in addition to the “FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee” (Dewing, 1975). The purpose of this study is to analyze the methods used by American press institutions to address Civil Rights activity within a sub-group of activists. Mainstream news sources and newspapers created specifically for Native American readers will be studied for coverage of the same events for alternative perspectives and to provide triangulation, or the use of several different methods to test a finding (Babbie, 2001, p. 113).

Newspaper coverage about the 17-day AIM occupation of Wounded Knee, a small village on the Sioux Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, will be studied. Activists involved in the occupation were heavily armed and took several captors hostage for two days, though none were injured. The Indians asked that a list of grievances be addressed before they would surrender the village to Federal authorities.

This study is important because of the profound impact that the press had in shaping the views of the American people during the event and other significant Civil Rights events like it. The press served as the only window that the American public had to information about Wounded Knee. The way the event was framed would have had a great and lasting impact on national views about AIM.

The thesis will include a textual analysis and will apply a theoretical framework including framing and agenda building concepts from Lang and Lang (1984), Scheufele's (2000), and Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1995).

Textual analysis, or internal criticism of historical documents, will be used to examine document credibility and to gain an understanding of content (Startt, 1989). Primary documents analyzed include FBI and Department of Interior records that became available to the public in 1975. It will examine press coverage itself and will discuss the historical framework surrounding and linking the events.

According to AIM activists, the Wounded Knee Occupation gained national attention for the group's causes. It was widely viewed as a victory for AIM leaders, though many were arrested, tried, tied up in court for several months and faced short prison terms after the events. The press learned that stories about militants and savages intrigued the public. Other historical events also affected coverage of the movements, and were focused on more by the media. For example, the emergence of the Watergate story distracted the media from Wounded Knee coverage (Zimmerman, 1976).

Stories about shoot-outs with police and looting at Wounded Knee seemed to support the attitude that AIM was destructive. Government press releases complained of the discord caused by the group. Because of constant media blackouts, the press often had to rely on government press releases and statements for their information. Despite the dependence on information from officials, some reports blamed the Federal government and local police for escalating the situation and refusing to negotiate on key points (Dewing, 1986).

The American Indian Movement (AIM) was formed in 1968 in Minnesota, following decades of tension between Native Americans and the United States government and discontent within Native American communities. Most reservations at the time were plagued with poverty and a major shortage of resources, including employment. Though education was heavily government-funded school dropout rates were high. Alcoholism and violence were rampant. Part of AIM's purpose was to bring attention to the poor conditions on reservations and other complaints that the group had about the United States government (Dewing, 1986).

AIM called for a reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or the BIA, a government branch that managed reservation life, including allocation of funds, education, law enforcement, and other government programs. Another issue was the failure of the United States government to honor treaties signed with Native Americans including those dating back more than one hundred years. The government's failure to uphold the agreements spawned AIM's campaign, "The Trail of Broken Treaties." AIM also wished to unify Native Americans and to end the poverty and violence that often marked their lives as Native Americans. Unity among the tribes was difficult to achieve, due to a lack of consensus on many core issues. The majority of Native Americans at the time disagreed with AIM's protest methods. Elected tribal governments also disagreed with AIM's "extremist" ways, while AIM contended that tribal officials and the BIA were corrupt and had used federal funding to advance their own political agenda (Dewing, 1986).

AIM hoped to gain attention for its cause by protesting, holding rallies, speaking out, and most importantly, by getting press coverage. The group successfully attracted worldwide media attention as television, radio, and print news eagerly followed their story. Members of AIM were often armed and dressed in traditional Indian clothing, dramatizing the story powerfully. Financial supporters of AIM included church groups, government programs, and individuals. Supporters included many other organizations often labeled as radical and anti-government groups, including the Black Panthers, Viet Nam Veterans against the War, and La Raza Unidad Party (Dewing, 1986).

In November, 1972, AIM marched on the BIA building in Washington DC, and occupied its offices for five days. Though the group denied violent intentions, they were armed and refused to leave until President Nixon granted them amnesty. Following the confrontation, the FBI initiated intensive efforts against AIM. In February 1972, Indians in the town of Gordon, Nebraska welcomed a group of AIM members into its community after four white men killed Native American Raymond Yellow Thunder. The group's presence in the town served a dual purpose. AIM was both protesting the murder and serving as a type of militia guarding Native Americans who lived in fear of violence (Dewing, 1986).

Eventually, the Oglala Sioux living on the Pine Ridge reservation invited AIM to protect them. Legally governed by the BIA and tribal council chief, Dick Wilson, the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota had an occupation of approximately 11,350 residents. Wilson had a reputation for ruling his community by force, with a "goon squad" that intimidated residents into supporting his causes. The tribal chief also used

the BIA as an ally to help manage the reservation, which further added to AIM's discontent with the government agency. While Wilson had won his position by a majority vote in an election, AIM contended that he had intimidated residents into voting for him, and the group was working toward his impeachment. There were four attempts to oust him from office. On February 24, 1973, impeachment hearings concluded by majority vote once again determined that Wilson would keep his position. Tensions continued to grow between Wilson and AIM leaders. Wilson had even banned some of the leaders from the reservation, though many refused to leave (Dewing, 1986).

In addition to dissatisfaction with Wilson, AIM members were outraged about a court hearing earlier that month, in which a white assailant found guilty of stabbing to death Native American Bad Heart Bull was charged with only second degree manslaughter, rather than first degree murder. On February 6, demonstrators raided the courthouse in Custer, South Dakota where the case had been tried. The Chamber of Commerce building was burned to the ground by the demonstrators (Dewing, 1986).

Tension from these events came to a head when approximately 200 heavily-armed AIM members led by leaders Dennis Banks and Russell Means occupied the town of Wounded Knee and held eleven of the town's residents captive. They chose a historical sight for the action as it marked the spot of the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, where 200 to 300 Indian men, women, and children were killed by the US Military after surrendering all but one of their weapons. The area held great significance for Native Americans and embodied AIM's claims of suppression and mistreatment by the American government. Termed "The Occupation of Wounded Knee," the 71-day

standoff between the FBI and AIM members, attracted worldwide media attention. AIM's armed guards surrounded the town and the group refused to surrender to the government until their grievances had been addressed in the form of new treaties signed by Congress. South Dakota Senators George McGovern and James Abourezk and Department of Interior Chair Kent Frizzell were among several representatives who visited with AIM leaders to try to resolve the issue. Because the Senators refused to negotiate with AIM as long as hostages were involved, AIM leader, Russell Means announced that they were free to go on March 1. Three exited the premises, reporting that the other eight had decided to stay of their own free will. Initial peace talks only seemed to exacerbate the situation, but government officials kept trying to strike an accord with the group. However, the situation was far from resolved.

During the occupation, protests about the government's reaction were springing up nation-wide, including those in Arizona, California, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Utah, and Texas. Many external parties supported AIM in the Occupation. The FBI reported that representatives of 50 groups were turned away from roadblocks in their efforts to get into the compound to support to AIM. In addition, many reporters snuck into the village past officials to get "the scoop." One reporter was arrested for his involvement in a supplies airdrop to AIM after the Department of Defense prohibited aid to the group. Several other journalists were also arrested during the course of the occupation on various charges relating to riot incitement.

Stakes at the confrontation were heightened. One federal agent was shot and seriously wounded and two AIM supporters were killed. Morale was low in the village.

Lawrence Lamont, one of the men who had been killed, was well-known in the Oglala Sioux community. In addition, a loss of electricity meant no modern means of refrigeration or cooking food, no access to water from electrical pumps, and no entertainment. Food supplies were low, sanitation had become an issue, and many of the protesters suffered from viruses and respiratory infections from inclement weather. The press lost interest in the story as Watergate came to a head, and Wounded Knee received less attention.

On May 5, the standoff ended after more than two months. Government officials met with AIM leaders many times to no avail, but finally agreed to conduct a thorough investigation of the BIA and tribal government. In addition, the government agreed to send White House representatives to speak with AIM leaders about upholding an 1868 treaty in which the government had promised Sioux Indians all the land east of the Missouri river, "as long as the grass grows, water flows, and the sun shines." AIM leaders agreed to lay down their weapons and submit to arrest if there had been warrants issued for them. The FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee suggest that FBI plans to end the occupation by force were already in place at the time of the surrender. Had the occupation lasted longer, it is probable that the FBI would have taken military action.

Two hundred thirty-seven AIM supporters were arrested for their involvement in Wounded Knee. The village was destroyed as slaughtered cattle carcasses littered its streets, the trading post and several other homes were burnt to the ground, and many of the homes had been destroyed. AIM leaders had not received the assurances from the

U.S. government that they had hoped for. While the Occupation gained wide media coverage for the American Indian Movement, it upset some of the group's more conservative supporters. Consequently, AIM struggled for financial support. In addition, the agreement temporarily solved the conflict, but the impeachment of Dick Wilson remained unresolved. The Tribal government was investigated, but Wilson kept his position. It was difficult to remove him because a Congressional act passed in the 1930s had granted self-government to the Indians. Impeaching Wilson without evidence of tribal government disintegration would have undermined the entire reservation structure and the authority of the BIA and the Department of Interior.

Several factors weakened AIM's stability. In August 1973, AIM leader Clyde Bellecourt was shot by Carter Camp, another of the group's leaders. While their argument was allegedly over money issues, Dennis Banks publicly announced that he suspected Camp of being an FBI informer. It was later revealed that several AIM members were paid to act as spies for the FBI, including the group's top security officer, Douglass Durham. In response to some of the negative attitudes held about AIM, Banks announced that the group was attempting to redefine its violent image. Shortly following, Banks was indicted for his involvement in the Custer, S.D. riot. In addition, a 1974 election again meant victory for Dick Wilson as he beat Russell Means with the majority vote for the position of Tribal Council leader. In June 1975, FBI agents Jack Coler and Ron Williams were killed in a shoot-out involving a group of AIM members on the Jumping Bull Compound near Pine Ridge. The deaths of the two agents spawned one of the largest man-hunts in FBI history, in which three AIM followers were indicted.

Of the three, only Leonard Peltier was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. By 1979, AIM had lost most of its following, and no longer acted as a national group.

The events that occurred during the occupation can be interpreted in a variety of ways. This study will focus on press coverage about the event by exploring reports from several different newspapers. It will study the ways the press interpreted the events, or “framed” them, and will provide hypothesis as to why certain angles were used with various aspects of the story. In addition article placement, emphasis, and the importance placed on the story will include the “agenda building” methods used by each newspaper.

Framing was apparent in the terms used in each article. For example, government officials and a majority of the press termed the residents of Wounded Knee remaining in the town during the occupation as “hostages,” though many of the occupants interviewed said that they were staying of their own accord. Others, including the Gildersleeve family, the Caucasian owners of the village trading post complained that their property had been looted and that AIM had taken everything from the shelves, but later claimed that they had never been hostages.

Reports that AIM had vandalized the town were popular with the press. However, AIM claimed that the FBI had been partly responsible for the damage to several of the houses in their clean-up efforts after the occupation. Some of the mobile homes had completely collapsed because they had been riveted with bullet holes. Some witnesses said that the homes had still been standing at the time of the evacuation. In addition, AIM members and other witnesses claimed that “Viet Nam”-type war tactics

had been used against them, including close-range fire from military vehicles. The Department of Defense claimed that the vehicles had never come within the range in question. Witnesses, including reporters who had snuck onto the compound, described seeing the vehicles at a much closer range. One reporter, who kept a daily journal of the events he witnessed at Wounded Knee, included accounts of being fired on by snipers when attempting to help injured Indians as well as instances where women and children were fired on. While the Department encouraged AIM members to surrender, occupiers claimed that they delayed surrender because they were afraid for their lives.

In order to examine newspaper coverage of the Wounded Knee Occupation, it is important to consider all of the other factors that affected news coverage during and directly before and after the 71-day period. Agenda building theories applied to this study would suggest that news-agents included some events, while ignoring others, and set the news agenda for their audiences. Framing theory suggests that the media slant story details in order to encourage the audience to form a particular opinion about the event. In order to apply these theories, it is important to review what other kinds of news stories were predominant during the time. The investigation of Nixon's Watergate scandal appeared frequently on the front page. Other news included Middle-Eastern terrorist activity, including the murder of American diplomats, the return of prisoners of war from Viet Nam, and other activity from Civil Rights groups like the Black Panthers. In addition, the day after the siege began, a group of Navajo youths kidnapped the mayor of Gallup, New Mexico as part of a protest. The incident led to the death of one of the young kidnapers in a police shoot-out. Civil unrest was an issue of major concern

during the time. News about radical civil rights protests also made circulating anti-government sentiment apparent.

Hollywood, which had long been accused of portraying Native Americans in stereotypical roles, also became involved in the issue when actor Marlon Brando refused the Oscar awarded to him for his role in "The Godfather." He protested the way the U.S. government handled the Wounded Knee situation and Hollywood's portrayal of Native Americans. Delivering a speech on behalf of Brando was a young, Native American actress who spoke out about her feelings on the standoff.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This is a historical thesis about newspaper coverage of the 1973 Occupation of Wounded Knee by AIM. The study uses the event to illustrate examples of framing and agenda building. The literature review includes sources that describe media coverage of the events and that provide additional historical background. The information included in this study was chosen based on its relevance to the analysis and events that occurred and coverage about them. Studies about agenda building and media framing and sources that provide insight into angles used by the media are cited. Also noted are sources that supply background and testimonials about the events used to place the press reports into a historical context.

The concepts of framing and agenda building were recurring themes throughout the following literature review. The literature reviewed suggested that signs of agenda building or framing resulted in selective reporting and spin in the coverage.

Inconsistent press attention will illustrate the agenda building process of AIM news coverage. This study will also attempt to explain some of the motives for the shift in attention within the studied time period, and will explain what news was either covered or occluded from the news. Lang and Lang (1983) defined agenda building as, "A collective process in which media, government, and the citizenry reciprocally influence one another in at least some respect" (pp. 58-59). McQuail's definition of framing will be used to describe some of the angles used by the press. McQuail (1983), "Framing is a

media *effect* that describes the influence on the public of the news angles, interpretative frameworks and ‘spin’ that contextualizes news reports and event accounts” (p. 426).

The American Indian Movement

Internal tensions, external conflicts with the U.S. government, and extreme conditions of poverty were just some of the factors that perpetuated the constant violence on the Sioux Pine Ridge reservation. In the 1970s, the Pine Ridge reservation had a high murder rate and was one of the poorest and most destitute of all Indian reservations, lacking in employment and access to federal funds (Redford, 1992).

A major source of conflict was the reservation’s division of core values. The majority of the resident Indians were non-traditionalists, or “half-bloods,” that didn’t believe in the ways of the old Indian. The leader of the non-traditionalists was Dick Wilson, president of the Pine Ridge tribal council. As leader, Wilson wielded power over the entire reservation, including the allocation of government program funds and the limited number of local jobs. For the most part, he kept employment and funds from the traditional Indians, who were already a decisively separate social group on the reservation at the time. Wilson was notorious for his “goon squad,” which bullied and harassed reservation Indians to force them into submission. These methods included setting fire to homes and beating, shooting, and killing Wilson’s enemies. He led a reign of terror linked to hundreds of unsolved murders (Redford, 1992).

The American government tended to sympathize with Wilson because he cooperated with their efforts to control the traditional Indians, who had chosen

confrontational methods of gaining attention for their cause throughout the sixties and seventies Civil Rights movement. They protested under the loosely formed American Indian Movement (AIM) group, which further escalated tensions with police and federal agents. Some critics of the federal government theorize that officials went so far to provide troops and weapons to assist the goons. Messerschmidt (1983) wrote, "The Federal Bureau of Investigation did *not* move to help prevent the criminality of the goon squad, nor did it even attempt to investigate the crimes that had been committed. Instead, the FBI in an indirect way, aligned with Wilson in repressing the traditional people and American Indian Movement" (p. 9).

Many attempts by the Oglala Sioux to impeach Wilson were deflected, as when he called on the FBI and U.S. Marshalls for help in 1973. That year, Wilson postponed his own impeachment trial, by convincing the U.S. government that AIM instigators were planning a violent public protest, and that they must immediately train the BIA (reservation) police in riot control.

With no protection or support from the American government, the traditional Oglala people of the Pine Ridge reservation turned to the support of the American Indian Movement (AIM) for protection. Some have even compared the extreme discrimination and "genocide" against Native Americans during that time to the Holocaust. AIM's goal was to band Native Americans together for a common cause. As one activist stated (Standing Bear, 1994), "Activists formed as a way to combat these hardships, and the widespread attention that resulted empowered and inspired Indian people across the country" (p. 301).

AIM was founded in the 1960s by traditional Indians and was considered part of the Civil Rights movement, though it had many non-Indian followers. It soon gained the nickname, "Red Power," after the Black Panther's Black Power movement. According to AIM members, the group helped raise public awareness of Indian rights. A primary reason for the formation of the movement was the group's desperate desire to become an independent, sovereign nation. They felt that they had relied on the American government for the majority of funds and jobs for far too long. As Alvin M. Josephy (1982) wrote, "For the sake of our children, for the sake of the spiritual and material well-being of our total community we must be able to demonstrate competence to ourselves. For the sake of our psychic stability as well as our physical well-being, we must be free men and exercise free choices" (p. 75).

Despite AIM's desire to form its own nation, the group realized the difficulties it would face in attempting to unite the many tribes of the United States, which were often divided internally. AIM anticipated problems with power struggle and the actual exercise of sovereign power, if it ever was granted to the group. As Cornell and Kalt (1998) stated, "The task tribes face is to use the power they have to build viable nations before the opportunity slips away" (p. 188).

While AIM worked toward the independence of the Indian people, the group also created a home for many American Indians who had long felt as outcasts of society. AIM was a movement, rather than a strict organization, with a loose group structure that allowed for almost anyone to participate, including members who were continually in trouble with the law. The media often took full advantage of AIM's outlaw following,

comparing modern Indians to the stereotypes of the “wild” Indians of the past. Some depictions of AIM weren’t far removed from the stereotypes typically seen in historical portrayals. According to Mary Ann Weston (1996), some press, such as the *Chicago Tribune* referred to the Indians as, “armed Indian militants,” and “A group of armed insurrectionists with a flair for publicity and no scruples.” The *Tribune* hinted at conspiracy and a “radical” movement by the Indians. Stereotypes differed greatly from news source to news source. For example, Weston (1996) wrote that *The New York Times* referred to the group as “militants” and “dissidents” only a few times and mostly called them “insurgents” (p. 145). Weston cited one *New York Times* article that stated that the Indians “...should be regarded as insurrectionists, no matter how quixotic their uprising” (p. 145). In this study, press portrayals of this kind will be further researched.

The Occupation of Wounded Knee

AIM moved from docile to confrontational demonstrations to gain attention for various causes. In 1973, several armed members of the group marched on and occupied the small village of Wounded Knee on the Sioux Pine Ridge Reservation. They were protesting the mistreatment of traditional Indians by Richard Wilson and the U.S. government’s “broken treaties,” or failed promises to reform Native American policy. Ward Churchill (1994) wrote, “The Occupation of Wounded Knee was undertaken primarily as a stand concerning issues of treaty rights, sovereignty, and self-determination for the Native people” (p. 4). AIM activists argued that they were taking

necessary steps to call attention to Indian rights and needs. Press from all over the world followed the events at Wounded Knee.

AIM members agreed that their movement created unity within full-blood Native American communities, but many AIM members argued that their actions weren't extreme enough, hence the emergence of the term "Uncle Tomahawk." Other critics of AIM argued that the group didn't represent the views of all Native Americans (Le Beau, 2000). This disunity contributed to disorganization within AIM; many Native American tribes held different views on major issues. Disagreement within tribes was common. This internal conflict within one race, termed "cultural pluralism" has been at the root of many twentieth century American Indian conflicts, and is one of the factors that led to the formation of the AIM movement. Phyllis A. Katz and Dalmas A. Taylor (1988) wrote, "Cultural pluralism assumes the persistence of inter-group conflicts and presses the question of how members of multiethnic liberal democracies should address disagreements stemming from divergent cultural values" (pp. 587-607). This phenomenon will be explored in the study.

AIM members chose Wounded Knee as the place for their 1973 protest because of the area's historical significance. In the late 1800s, a group of more than 200-350 unarmed American Indians, including women and children were shot and killed in a massacre by the U.S. Army. Americans became increasingly aware of the historical event when the book Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Brown was published in 1970. Lazarus (1991) wrote, "Sympathetic Americans reproached themselves for what their ancestors had destroyed and warmly embraced the new Indians..." (p. 292).

The press was immediately interested in the occupation, especially when the U.S. army surrounded the village with heavy weaponry including tanks. Several residents remained in the town with the protestors during the occupation and were labeled as “hostages.” Though only lasting 71 days, the Occupation of Wounded Knee was important for American Indians across the country. At the forefront of the occupation were AIM leaders Dennis Banks and Russell Means. Means was a charismatic leader and the most “visible and vocal Indian spokesman” (Bahr, 1972, p. 528). Bahr (1972) contended that the media focused on Means because he possessed a “movie star” like presence (p. 528).

AIM’s reputation and popularity grew as a result of the Wounded Knee incident. Alvin Josephy (1982) wrote:

“Though discrimination continued, AIM’s reputation soared among reservation Indians. What tribal leaders had not dared to do to protect their people, AIM had done. As a catalyst, the confrontation increased demands for self-determination, and trends that had begun in the 1960’s quickened. Fearing Wounded Knees on their own reservations, tribal governments showed a greater concern for the support of their own people and more independent -- sometimes even threatening -- in their relations with the BIA” (p. 225).

When confronted by the press, Dick Wilson denied the use of violence and intimidation. He claimed that AIM was just a group of “crazy Indians,” and he shifted blame from himself as the catalyst for the occupation. In Congressional notes on a trial following the Wounded Knee occupation, Wilson criticized AIM and Dennis Means for participating in violent protest. He also emphasized the fact that not all Native Americans supported AIM. In reports from the trial, Wilson said:

“Again, we Oglalas have our differences and we are going to continue to have our differences. But, we don’t settle them with guns and by taking hostages and by

destroying property. We have elections and we abide by the decisions of the majority. Please don't confuse us with outside invaders and a few local malcontents" (Trial record, p. 7).

Many news sources described the inconsistencies in Native American views and goals in their reports. According to Rolland Dewing (1985), *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *Star* questioned whether the AIM movement was representative of the Indian cause as a whole.

AIM used the media as a vehicle to bring public attention to its causes. "The media plays a central role -- for good and for ill -- in all activism, and particularly Indian activism." However, the media did not always favor the American Indian. Media critics contend that mainstream publications at the time were highly influenced by US government framing and that even media sympathizers of AIM largely misconstrued the events in an attempt to dramatize them. Like many civil rights activists of the time, the American Indian Movement advocated the redemption of years of injustice that they believed could only be fully understood by the victimized group. They believed that the American people didn't know the extent of Indian suffering because their only window to the Indian world was the media. Many Indians accused the media of glamorizing, hyping-up, escalating, and misrepresenting AIM events. Despite Indian discontent with the media, it played a big part in spreading awareness about AIM, especially when the stories helped to "sell" the news (p. 3).

Some local newspapers published articles that were sympathetic to AIM's ideals. Similarly, national publications such as *The New York Times* sometimes took a similar

stance. The *New York Times* ran an editorial that acknowledged that the Indians were “insurrectionists,” but wrote:

“Yet no official in his right mind can want to employ the armed might of this country to subdue a tiny band of men engaged in a symbolic war in a nation that had, in fact broken its treaties with them, decimated their people and reduced their entire race to a wretched remnant. Sooner or later, the braves will weary of this unheroic ‘house arrest’” (“Out at Wounded Knee,” March 15, 1973, p. L12).

While camera crews captured dramatic portrayals of armed Indians in war paint, press agencies were increasingly being pressured by the government to play the incident down to help ease tensions. By removing the Indians from the spotlight, the government hoped to more quickly diffuse the occupation without having the public watch their every move. Burnette and Koster (1974) wrote:

“AIM had always had a sort of love-hate relationship with the press, but at Wounded Knee, the relationship deteriorated mostly into hate on both sides. The reporters and the networks came in for heavy criticism by the Justice Department for the first heavy coverage of the incident, and some of the reporters seemed to try to play up a more critical view of AIM rather than jeopardize their source of government press releases” (p. 34).

News “blackouts” ordered by the federal government ordered reporters to stop all broadcasts about the incident to “downplay” the event. However, many reporters snuck back on the compound with the help of activists, smuggling their stories back out when they were done. The government also tried to no avail to discourage the reporters from covering the event by making the point over and over that they couldn’t ensure their safety if they stayed within the compound.

International journalists traveled miles to capture the story. Kipp (1994), a Native American, wrote, “Many of the foreign journalists had been half-way around the world to capture the essence of this strange and incongruous uprising, red Indians challenging

Uncle Sam to a duel on the High Plains” (p. 227). Similarly, Peter Mathiessen (1983) wrote, “Wounded Knee II was immediately adopted by the European press, giving the Indian cause an international notoriety...The Indians knew that they were risking an angry reprisal from the U.S. government” (p. 71).

Critics of AIM would later contend that movement leaders had coerced and manipulated reporters into covering the event. Journalists often tried to take photos of Native Americans participating in stereotypical ways, such as the angry warrior pose, in which Indians were clad with war paint and guns. Many argue that AIM had encouraged reporters to stay. Kipp (1994) wrote that AIM essentially told reporters, “Stay with us and get the story of a lifetime, or die trying” (p. 228). Holm (1985) contended:

“The nature of the Indian force occupying Wounded Knee astounded Indians and Whites alike. This was no ordinary protest of young Indians intent in making headlines...although plenty of headlines were made and eventually accusations were leveled against Banks and Means for manipulating the media” (p.75).

The American public watched Wounded Knee in anticipation as the media fed them the exciting story of the dramatic standoff between AIM, the government, and the “hostages” being kept inside the town. Native American academic, Vine Deloria (1985) wrote, “The overtones of potential violence, a possible repeat of the original massacre, made the protest appear to be a nightmare replayed on television every evening before the eyes of a horrified world,” and “...the newspaper headlines about Indian hostages facing almost certain death thrilled the general public...” (pp. 266-267).

Several of the “hostages” at Wounded Knee denied that they were being held against their will in front of news cameras. Reporters who snuck across police lines later

reported that the hostages seemed much less frightened of the Indians that the press had portrayed. Burnette (1974) recalled:

“Later the same day, several reporters sneaked past the roadblocks set up by the U.S. Marshals and learned that some of the former hostages were more frightened by the federal men ringing the hamlet than they were of the Indians involved in the take-over” (p. 228).

Many of the “hostages” also testified that they were there willingly. Wilbur Riegert, an 82-year-old hostage said:

“We as a group of hostages decided to stay on to save A.I.M. and our own property. Had we not, those troops would have come down here and killed all of these people. The real hostages are the A.I.M. people” (Matthiessen, 1983, p. 69).

The FBI was aware of public interest in the event, and the growing sympathy toward the AIM cause. A Pentagon intelligence report by Colonel Frank B. Oblinger in 1975 emphasized the fact that the government handled Wounded Knee with such direct force because of the public’s intense attention on the event. According to Matthiessen, Oblinger concluded:

“The Indians do not appear intent upon inflicting bodily harm upon the legitimate residents of Wounded Knee, nor upon the federal law enforcement agents operating in this area, even though small arms fire has been exchanged between opposing forces. Because of its isolated geographical location, the seizure and holdings of Wounded Knee poses no threat to the Nation, to the state of South Dakota or the Pine Ridge Reservation itself. However, it is conceded that this act is a source of irritation, if not embarrassment, to the Administration in general, and the Department of Justice in particular” (Matthiessen, 1983, p. 69).

Though only two deaths resulted from the occupation, gunfire between officials and the Indians was exchanged consistently throughout the event. The military used the exchange as an opportunity to end the occupation.

“This ‘firefight’ presented the government with its last chance to end the occupation by a quick military strike while it still had the support of the general

public: already the public reaction, maneuvered by the media, was veering from outrage over the hostages to sympathy for the beleaguered Indians (one poll declared that 51 percent of the American people sympathized with the Indians, with only 21 percent against)” (Mathiessen, 1983, p. 70).

On the morning of March 26, Federal officials ordered away the last news team covering the event. The group from CBS was the last press group to leave the premise, and the standoff ended ten days later.

Stories of the devastation and vandalism at Wounded Knee ran in newspapers. AIM was chastised for the destruction. Pictures of garbage, broken furniture, obscenities scrawled on walls, and smashed glass accompanied articles. Dick Wilson helped solidify the idea that AIM was responsible. The press quoted Wilson often. He said, “these hoodlums and clowns- that’s the way they live” (Zimmerman, 1976, p. 328).

In the subsequent Wounded Knee trials, it was revealed that FBI agents also helped to tear the village apart in what they claimed was an investigation for weapons. This included the destruction of three mobile homes that collapsed under a barrage of FBI issue gunfire. When the homes were later bulldozed and piled with dirt, the FBI claimed that it was part of the “clean-up” process, but AIM members argued that it was the FBI’s method of destroying evidence. There were also accusations that after the FBI began their investigation, they opened the village up to be pillaged and looted by Wilson’s Goon Squad. The defense team supported this argument with testimony from witnesses present the day before the occupation, stating that their homes were still in tact at the end of the occupation. Other evidence included damaged homes located behind government lines and outside of Wounded Knee perimeters at the time of the occupation. AIM was

also accused of stealing and destroying religious artifacts, though the group argued that it was also not in its interest to destroy items representing Native American heritage (Zimmerman, 1976, p. 328).

After the investigation was complete, the FBI took "...carefully selected group of reporters and television film crews on a quick, guided tour of the damage" (Zimmerman, 1976, p. 328). The press was not allowed to be alone on the grounds (Zimmerman, 1976, p. 328).

Russell Means, who was incarcerated for his involvement in the occupation, attempted to warn the media that the government and Wilson would destroy what was left of Wounded Knee so that they could blame the occupiers. He said, "That day, the mass media carried the more dramatic footage and pictures of the destroyed reservation village. The result was an important public opinion victory for the beleaguered Justice Department." By the time evidence revealed that all of the looting had not been committed by AIM followers, the press was distracted by new developments in the Watergate story. The record was never set straight for AIM. Zimmerman (1976) contended:

"It was a major turning point. From then on, the government grew more confident that the American people would not be able to keep abreast of continuing events on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and federal officials became much less restrained in their dealings with the Indians" (p. 329).

The exclusion of the new evidence about the FBI's involvement in the destruction of Wounded Knee is an example of agenda building. The public still believed that AIM was responsible because the press had not informed them of the new developments in the case. Because the press is limited in the number of stories that it can cover or that will

capture interest, Woodward and Denton argue that the press creates a “national agenda” by “controlling the information disseminated to the public.” According to McQuail (2000), agenda building can be intentional or unintentional. In the case of addressing accusations that AIM members vandalized Wounded Knee, this study will consider whether the omission of new evidence in the news added to the group’s reputation of being divided and self-interested.

Wilson protested as the press became more and more involved with AIM members. He contended that the press was adding to the tension and inciting the actions of the Indians by encouraging their behavior.

Wilson also used the press as a tool to promote his own cause. Holm (1985) wrote:

“Wilson had gained many allies that could help promote his cause through the press, while at the same time ruining the image of the AIM movement. For example, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) sided with him because he supported tribal sovereignty. Aside from all political support, NCAI further committed itself to assisting Wilson in regard to developing strategies, lobbying, and press relations” (p. 140).

Wilson went so far as attempting to link AIM activity with Communism. In a proclamation to “Fellow Oglalas and Fellow Patriots,” Wilson attempted to defame A.I.M, according to Matthiessen (1985). He declared, “What has happened at Wounded Knee is all part of a long range plan of the Communist Party....There is no doubt that Wounded Knee is a major Communist thrust” (p. 74). Wilson reprimanded the press that supported A.I.M:

“...the liberal press and the TV news media is right at their elbow. No reporter or T.V. camera man has ever won a war, but they can destroy a nation by the propaganda of lies and hate that they broadcast for every Crackpot, Screwball,

and Communist-front organization who wants to take a swat at our American way of life, take a blast at the U.S. Constitution, spit at the American flag, burn it, wear it as a poncho, or hang it up-side down” (p. 74).

Many AIM followers argued that while the occupation appeared to be a plot to gain press coverage, it was in fact a political issue about Indian leadership. Again, the coverage that resulted may have been exposure for AIM, but many of the reports didn't portray AIM in a positive light. According to Burnette (1974), Russell Means said:

“AIM was caught in a bind. They needed the newsmen and their attention focused on Wounded Knee to prevent a massive crackdown [by Dick Wilson or the FBI], but as the siege wore on, AIM leaders began to have the feeling that they were going to ‘get screwed’ every time they talked to a reporter... They're treating this thing like a goddam comic opera” (Burnette, 1974, p. 231).

Conversely, Means was also known to seek attention from the press. In one instance, two white men were captured on reservation grounds. Means suspected they were sneaking on the grounds to try to “pick a couple of Indians off,” as they were both armed and had no valid excuse to be there (p. 230). Burnette described the scene in the following way: “As the white prisoners were being marched away, one cameraman ran up, having missed their departure, Means obligingly had the prisoners marched back and forth until everyone had enough pictures” (p. 230). Many reporters felt that they were being “hyped” by the over-zealous Indians who seemed a little too eager to assist the press, including one reporter from *Time* magazine, who called some of the AIM members “over-cooperative” (p. 230). However, the press continued to look to AIM members to give the inside scoop.

Means often proved to be one of the most charismatic leaders of the AIM movement. He possessed a talent for staging demonstrations and attracting press

coverage. “Means was instrumental in AIM’s achieving several of its earliest and most important media coups” (p. 257), wrote Ward Churchill (1994). Critics called some of the events publicity stunts. They included the theft of a Mayflower replica and painting the Plymouth Rock red on Thanksgiving Day. AIM also occupied Mount Rushmore in what they called a “counterccelebration” of the 4th of July (Churchill, 1994, p. 257).

As a high profile movement, AIM struggled to maintain dignity and hold the spotlight simultaneously. While AIM may have initially elevated Indian pride, the group seemed to drop the ball as their publicity grew. Sayer (1997) contended:

“In November, *The New York Times* credited AIM with getting the public’s attention and in instilling a ‘newfound sense of pride and purpose’ in many Native Americans, but argued that six months after Wounded Knee, the Indian rights movement had vanished as a result of internal bickering, legal tangles, and other problems unique to Indians” (p. 61).

Lazarus (1991) agreed that internal dissention “crippled” the AIM movement (p. 329). Some media critics argue that it is often difficult for “opposition” groups to maintain attention when the public becomes bored with their cause (Sayer, 1997, p. 61).

Despite the “love/hate” relationship that AIM had with the media, many who have studied AIM contend that press attention helped gain the overall sympathy and favor of the American people. Burnette (1974) wrote:

“As newspapers and TV screens brought home the shocking picture of armored personnel carriers moving toward a band of badly armed Indians, the public reacted with a vast outburst of sympathy for the defenders of the besieged hamlet. Veteran Western Union operators reported that the flood of telegrams to the White House urging restraint and voicing support for the activists was the greatest outpouring of public emotion in their memory” (p. 234).

Some argued that the public attention received by Wounded Knee didn’t help the group to gain tribal leadership. Indians questioned whether Caucasians, or any of the

general public, really understood the issues they were fighting for. Some AIM members agreed the event hindered the goals of the overall movement. AIM activist Roman Roubideaux argued that AIM indiscriminately sought any kind of attention from the press as they had a “preference for publicity over policy.” Mary Crow Dog (1991), who was the wife of medicine man Leonard Crow Dog, contended, “The media said that we were about to stage bank robberies, storm prisons, set fire to the state capitol, blow up Mount Rushmore, and assassinate the governor” (p. 81). Crow Dog described the fear felt toward AIM movement:

“We did freak out the honkies. We were feared throughout the Dakotas. I could never figure out why this should have been so. We were always the victims. We never maimed or killed. It was we who died or got crippled” (p. 80).

Baylor’s article (1992) on his study of the NBC Evening News from 1968-1979 analyzed the “dysfunction” of news coverage about Native Americans during the time. Baylor (1992) contended, “Media attention often impedes movement success. The positive or negative outcome of media attention largely depends on how media agents ‘frame’ movement goals and actions” (pp. 241-255). Baylor rejected the idea that media frames events, but said that it was merely reflecting a class-biased community. He contended that the news tended to glamorize events to make them more socially exciting and that event coverage was non-sympathetic because the Indians were of a different social class than most media agents. Baylor also blamed the media’s tendency to gather information from traditional, routine sources, including government agencies, as a source of biased coverage.

Means (1995) also claimed that the press had been given “biased” information by government agencies during the occupation. He recalled that CBS reporters were turned away by the police on a main road, and rented a four-wheel-drive vehicle in order to sneak onto the compound. According to his account, the press took pictures of the garbage piling up in the tiny town as the siege extended through more than a two-month period. He said that the photos of the poor conditions weakened the journalists’ trust in government agencies as an objective news source and sparked more interest for reporters to cover the event in person. He explained that AIM had cleared the garbage littering the town, but that the press was uninterested in taking photos without the litter because they would be less dramatic (p. 264).

It is evident that both sides in the Wounded Knee conflict presented stereotypical images to the media. While the defense attempted to portray the noble, heroic, masculine sides of Banks and Means, the opposition played up the image of rough savages killing in a mad fit of vengeance. Sayer (1997) concluded that “AIM had learned to use the media to its advantage in the early stages of Wounded Knee, yet, in doing so, they sometimes traded on America’s fascination with the image of the male warrior” (pp. 10, 61). He contended that negative coverage occurred as a result of both sides playing into “characterization,” or old stereotypes. Portrayals of AIM during Wounded Knee were similar to the traditional frames of Native Americans in the media such as “blood-thirsty warriors,” “outlaws,” “noble savage,” or a “friend” or “enemy” to whites. One of the most damaging portrayals was that of the disloyal Indian, or the kind of Indian who would have destroyed the town of Wounded Knee (Weston, 1996, p. 144).

Many AIM sympathizers argue that the press misunderstood the issues surrounding Wounded Knee, or simply played up an angle that would sell, like that of “Red Power,” a term borrowed from the Black Panther movement. Holm (1985) contended that the issues surrounding Wounded Knee were more traditional versus progressive power struggles. Holm (1985) wrote, “Reporters primarily focused on the American Indian Movement as an Indian version of militant minority organizations such as the Black Panthers” (p. 137).

The press was accused of fabricating the facts in order to make them more interesting to the public. Burnette (1974) wrote:

“By the second month of the Wounded Knee siege, the news overview had been revised considerably. Means and Banks were no longer portrayed as doomed heroes battling oppression but as a couple of urban toughs trying to seize power. The coverage veered from one unreal extreme to the other, never bothering to assess the facts” (p. 230).

Burnette (1974) continued:

“By March 4 newsmen were tripping over one another trying to answer the obvious questions about Wounded Knee. Were the AIM leaders simply playing games to get publicity, or were they serious? How many Indians on the reservation actually supported the stand taken by the traditional chiefs and the AIM spokesmen? Why did the U.S. send in marshals and FBI men to police an Indian matter? What was the truth about Wilson’s goon squads? All those questions should have been answered during or after the siege. Instead, the press people spent most of their time waiting for government press releases, rapping in the Pine Ridge parking lot, drinking coffee at a café owned by a non-Indian, and hunting for bootleg liquor. Between marathon bull sessions and padding their expense accounts, they picked up enough government-supplied information and ravings from Dick Wilson to piece together a disjointed running commentary of the Wounded Knee incident” (pp. 228-229).

Framing/Agenda Building

Babbie (2001) contended that historians and social scientists study history differently because social scientists are more focused on seeking commonalities and parallels between historical events, thus the emergence of social science's comparative/historical analysis. Babbie (2001) wrote of comparative/historical analysis, "The method's name includes the word comparative because social scientists – in contrast to historians who may simply describe a particular set of events – seek to discover common patterns that recur in different times and places" (p. 304). Babbie contended that, "Social scientists are also interested in tracing the development of social forms over time and comparing those developmental processes across cultures" (p. 322). Similarly, this study will explore the transition of media coverage across subcultures within American society: regional coverage in the mid-west and Native American communities. The comparative/historical method will allow the focus of this study to widen through the examination of the subjects' place in history and society, and through the exploration of similarities and differences in the history that surrounded them.

This study will analyze the use of "new templates" within coverage of the Wounded Knee Occupation. Reaves (1996) wrote:

"Routines of news gathering make outcomes more predictable for journalists to meet their organizational expectations. For example, Berkowitz [1992] has shown that routines such as typifying or anticipating the themes and plot lines of stories, help journalists to package and meet deadlines for the non-routine story" (p. 23).

This study explores the usage of news templates within Wounded Knee coverage. As explained by Kipp (1994), it was easier for the press to portray Indians within the

confines of news templates as “angry warriors,” than to explore the complexities of the situation (p. 18). It is likely that other types of anti –government, “militant” activity were described in the same way.

Similarly, Bird (1996) contended that framing played a large part in the reporting of Wounded Knee. She explained that framing involves the reinterpretation, repackaging, and “ideological massaging” of information. (p. 181). Framing often involves the use of stereotypes to repackage and simplify information. Some academics argue these types of generalizations in the media help viewers to associate and organize knowledge in a more efficient way. Trenholm and Jensen (1995) contended, “Prototypes help us to categorize objects, people, events, or relationships” (p. 150). Since their earliest portrayals in the media, Native Americans have been characterized to fit into neat categories, for the convenience of “prototyping” (p. 150).

Coward (1999) argued that oversimplifying issues for the public is dangerous. Coward (1999) wrote, “Although Native Americans were obviously different from Euro-Americans in many important ways, the newspapers created popular identities that oversimplified and overemphasized these differences. As a result, Indians in the newspapers seemed much more threatening and violent than actual Indians...” (Coward, p. 13).

Berkowitz (1992) agreed with Reaves on the dangers of simplifying issues for the public. He wrote, “Anthropologically-oriented studies about the nature of news have argued that news stories are essentially reproductions of common myths and folklore” (p. 45). He further explained that because of a limited number of resources, including time

and money, fierce competition, and the pressure to make news entertaining and profitable, the press “typifies” events. In this way, audiences automatically understand the message without extensive clarification. Berkowitz wrote:

“Although many gatekeeping studies have treated newswork as decision-making about individual stories by individual journalists, newswork really exists in a cultural context where people constantly encounter extraneous conditions and accomplish work in a way that cannot meaningfully be understood through an examination of discrete decisions or variables” (p. 47).

According to Berkowitz, the press typifies stories into “a predictable scheme of actors, settings, and story plots” (p. 47). He contended:

“Typification causes journalists to view and modify occurrences as close to their prototypes or to ignore them if they are dissimilar, so that the scheme of stories in the culture of journalism actually serves as its own authority for interpretation” (p. 47).

Gans (1979) found similar results when he conducted studies on media coverage of the 1970s. He wrote that news reporters tended to focus on minorities the most as they either demonstrate “racial integration” or fight it (p. 22). Gans contended, “Because the news is dominated by stories about conflict, and because of its concern with unity and consensus, or the lack thereof, the overall picture is of a conflicted nation or society” (p. 22). Gans noted that minorities make it into the news as a result of obvious distinguishing minority characteristics.

Keefe (1992) concluded that various ethnic groups often describe other ethnic groups in terms of their differences, emphasizing them as the cultural “other” (p. 35). Similarly, Berkhofer (1978) suggested that news coverage about AIM was problematic because it functioned within a white-driven society. He discussed the importance of mass media in affecting significant political change in a white community in order to change

American views. He wrote, "Ultimately, tribal self-determination and the right to be Indians depends upon attitudes of whites" (p. 191). He continued, "Indian policies depend upon their ability to influence Whites and other Indians" (pp. 196-197).

Berkhofer was referring to the inability of the Indians to achieve their goals without the cooperation of the U.S. government and the rest of mainstream society as the reservation Indians were still governed by these bodies, despite the isolation they often felt from them.

Critics of government policy on American Indian issues theorize about the U.S. government's justification for the poor treatment of Native Americans in the twentieth century. Sanchez, Stuckey, and Morris (1996) wrote about the concept of "rhetorical exclusion" (p. 27); they theorized that the government will justify extreme measures as needed to protect democracy and will exclude rules or ideologies that inhibit their exercise of power. They criticized the government for their "ad hoc ethics" (p. 27). Sanchez et al wrote, "Rhetorical exclusion, like agenda setting, justifies whatever tactics those in power deem necessary to control challenges to its legitimacy, surveillance of them, and a need to define them and their actions in specific, ideological predetermined ways." They continued:

"It enables policy makers to maintain social control without detracting from their own public image or the perceived legitimacy of their method of government. It has become as institutional in the United States as the race, gender, class, and the imperial domination it serves to uphold" (pp. 27-30).

Similarly, Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1995) contended that the media helps to maintain a power structure by consistently protecting the governing body with the most power in a given situation. They describe the media as a guard dog for those in power,

but not necessarily a representative for the community at large. A political elite generally creates policies, governs the masses, and simultaneously molds the views that are projected by the media, according to the guard dog perspective. The media never presents a unique viewpoint, but merely reflects that of the most powerful player or players in order to protect them. While the guard dog perspective holds that the media actually works to protect the entire power structure, it contends that individuals are used by the media to embody issues and organizations because it is easier to portray a single person as a hero or villain versus groups or political parties.

Cases of guard dog media are most clearly seen in smaller communities where outside threats are looming, according to Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien (1995). They contended that the relationship is symbiotic between the media and those in power, despite occasional complaints by governing bodies about the media or vice versa. This view is different from that of McComb and Shaw (1993) because it suggests that the media is not an independent power in creating agenda, but just a supporter of the true agenda creators.

Lang and Lang (1983) agreed that those in power had a profound impact on the media, but argued that the influence was mutual between public, media, and political figures. They defined agenda building as, "A collective process in which media, government, and the citizenry reciprocally influence one another in at least some respect" (pp. 58-59). Agenda building includes: focused press attention on an issue, the amount and kind of coverage, how the issue is framed, the language used to describe it, the way it is linked to other stories, and the status of the press agent reporting it. Feedback loops in

the agenda building formula include the way government representatives see themselves and their actions portrayed, press pooling and similarities in press reports, and public opinion indicators. Lang and Lang also differ from McComb and Shaw because they contend that it is essential for the media to link an issue to a pre-existing political framework and provide reasons for taking a side before it becomes part of an agenda. This process, according to Lang and Lang, is impossible for the media to do completely independently.

Berkowitz (1987) also held that the media only received their information from a select group of elites. He contended that, "Routine sources build the television news agenda" (p. 508). Gitlin (1980) also criticized the media for being too submissive to those in power. He wrote, "The closer an issue is to the core interests of national political elites, the more likely is a blackout of news that effectively challenges that interest" (p. 5). Steele (1995) also criticized the experts selected by the media to help interpret the news. He wrote that the use of these experts, "undermine the ideals of balance and objectivity, and severely limit how news is framed" (p. 799).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This study is important because of the profound press influence on the views of the American people during Wounded Knee and other significant Civil Rights events like it. The way that the events were framed preconditioned national policies and affected attitudes held by white audiences about Native American issues following the events. The method used in this study will explore how the press reported the events by analyzing coverage in national, localized, and specialized publications and through the use of published official documents, pictorial sources, and secondary written sources.

While the comparative/historical method allows for a study to examine events over extended periods of time, the method also requires a limitation on the amount of material covered in the study. A researcher must specifically identify the who, what, when, where, and why of a study before beginning. The “who,” in this case, is limited to individuals involved in Wounded Knee and the press agents who reported on them. The “what” is the press coverage of these events and historical documents that described the way the news was gathered and disseminated. The study will focus on dates between February 27-May 10, 1973, although it will include subsequent reporting to provide an additional historical framework. The study will examine both local and national coverage, though it is not comprehensive. It is likely that additional articles not included in this study appeared within the dates mentioned.

This is a historical study that used research to examine press coverage, documents from the Department of Interior and the FBI, including court testimonies, and pictorial

sources. The study will examine first-hand accounts of press coverage during each of the events and the press coverage itself. It will also discuss the historical framework surrounding and linking each of the events.

Secondary sources contributed greatly to this study by providing perspective and background. Babbie (2001) warned against the “naïve assumption” that historical documents always accurately depict historical events. In order to combat this problem, this study will look for repetition, corroboration, and triangulation among primary and secondary sources (p. 314). According to Babbie (2001), triangulation is the use of several different methods to test a finding (p. 113). In this case, several different sources will be used to compare and contrast information from the press. Reports from large media institutions, government documents, and Native American publications will be reviewed for consistency and discrepancy.

This study will use textual analysis to examine all sources. Babbie (2001) wrote that a textual analysis “permits the study of processes occurring over a long time” (p. 314). Startt (1989) suggests that content analysis helps the reviewer to perform an “internal criticism” of documents, or to verify the author’s credibility and to interpret and gain an understanding of content (pp. 117, 121).

The weakness of textual analysis is the method’s nature of only offering isolated explanations of events. Start and Sloan (1989) suggest, “[Content analysis] can only do one thing: describe content. It cannot show, for example, a cause-effect relationship, and it cannot establish motives.” Triangulation and comparative/historical framework will also be included in this study to provide additional information to combat the disparities

of textual analysis. However, the rich textual analysis of this study will share one overall goal of answering the questions, “who says what to whom, why, how, and with what effect” (p. 305).

As applied to this study, an analysis of mass communications over an extended time frame, rich textual analysis will serve as a way to gain an understanding of the American press’ approach to Civil Rights and AIM.

Rich textual analysis will be performed on a relevant and systematic sample of all print press pertaining to the specific events mentioned. The study will review frames used to describe AIM followers, such as “social dissidents,” “militants,” “savages,” “freedom fighters,” and “Civil Rights activists.” Implicit and explicit labels placed on the subjects will be pinpointed to gain a better sense of what overall and specific messages are being conveyed.

The study will examine latent and manifest meaning to record inferences or literal mentions of defined units of analysis. The study will examine underlying meanings, or latent content and literal phrases such as “social dissidents,” or manifest content. Both latent and manifest mentions will be analyzed as it is difficult to account for all inferences without the help of latent coding. Conversely, it is difficult to ascertain each and every suggestion of social dissidence without the framework of literal phrases associated with manifest content. A literal framework will also help combat social biases and perceptions that may lead the researcher to believe that a parallel is being drawn between two variables (Babbie, 1973, p. G6).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

“I was dispatched to the Pine Ridge Reservation and arrived in the early morning hours of Feb. 28. I had gotten to know both Means and Banks fairly well in the months leading up to the occupation. Means was very shrewd in dealing with the media, especially those from several of the major metropolitan newspapers. He was, and is, a very intelligent man and knew how to manipulate the media.”

Terry De Vine, Associated Press Reporter (personal communication, February 26, 2003)

“Russell would climb a fucking flagpole if you’d take his picture.”

Lehman Brightman, AIM Supporter (personal communication, November 2002)

Mid-Western and International Coverage

On February 27, 1973, a group of FBI agents watched an automobile caravan depart from Calico Hall, located on the Oglala Sioux Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. The Pine Ridge reservation was the largest reservation in the country at the time with a population of 11,350 people in 2,500-square-miles. Nearly half of the Pine Ridge workforce was unemployed (“Indians Hold Hostages,” 1973, p. 1A, 4A). The cars heading south carried approximately 200 supporters of the Civil Rights group, the American Indian Movement (AIM). Tension between the group and law enforcement had been building since AIM’s inception in 1968. AIM was known as a radical group that used drastic measures to gain attention for its causes such as civil rights and the poor conditions and lack of employment on the reservation. Activity earlier that month had included a riot in which the courthouse and Chamber of Commerce in nearby Custer, South Dakota were set on fire, the latter of which had burned to the ground. Dozens of government documents had been stolen during the riot. FBI agents had observed as AIM

members gathered at Calico Hall with guns, knives, and an assortment of other weapons throughout the day, anticipating for the next incident. Special FBI agents trailed the caravan as it moved south that afternoon, unsure of their next move (FBI, 1975).

A white paper from the Department of Justice (1975) reported that the Pine Ridge Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) learned that the group had arrived at Wounded Knee on the reservation at approximately 8:34 PM on February 27. Reports of rioting, looting, and gunfire were coming from the village. Wounded Knee was a predominately Oglala Sioux village with a population of approximately 100 people that comprised 17 families. The village trading post, owned by the Caucasian Gildersleeve family, was stripped of all supplies, including weapons, food, and artifacts. An FBI memorandum (1975) reported that a special agent, Joseph Trimbach, ordered roadblocks around the village to contain the rioters once they had entered the village that night. The blocks were manned by armed FBI agents, U.S. Marshals, and BIA police (FBI, 1975, p. ix).

The FBI memorandum and Department of Justice (1975) suggested that AIM had chosen Wounded Knee as a spot for confrontation because it was the historical site where 200-300 unarmed Indian men, women, and children were killed by the United States cavalry in 1890. While some consider the incident a battle, including the Department of Justice in a white paper published in 1975, it is commonly referred to as the Wounded Knee Massacre (Department of Justice, 1975, p. xiii, FBI, 1976, p. ix).

Journalists Who Covered Wounded Knee

Reporters from almost every major metropolitan newspaper and press association covered the 71-day Wounded Knee Occupation. Each reporter came with their own background and preconceived notions of the situation. Several defied warnings from authorities and hired local ranchers to help them sneak past roadblocks into the compound.

Key journalists covering the story included the Associated Press' Terry De Vine, Richard Ciccone, Jim Wilson, and Terry Woster. De Vine had been assigned to other AIM coverage in the past, including the standoff between officials and the group at the BIA building in South Dakota. The majority of Associated Press journalists at Wounded Knee had covered Civil Rights issues, including radical groups, politics, minority rights, and Native American issues. Many other newspapers adapted and ran variations on the Associated Press stories. John Kifner, Mike Waldron, and Bill Kovach from the *New York Times* and Robert Enstad from the *Chicago Tribune* were also assigned to the story. Enstad had focused on Civil Rights as well as politics and high profile court cases. Kifner had written on similar topics, including other radical groups like the Klu Klux Klan and issues dealing with the political economy. Kovach had written stories relating to the F.C.C. and First Amendment Rights. Waldron had reported issues surrounding the JFK assassination. Every reporter was aware that AIM was at times performing for the media to get attention. A critical review of the group's actions carried through in many of the newspapers, but showed through much more in some reports than others.

February 28: Day One

On the morning of February 28 the story hit newspapers. The front page of *The Saint Louis Post Dispatch* read “200 Indian Militants Seize Town; Hold Hostages.” The Dispatch News Service article reported that the members of the American Indian Movement were “in control” of the small town and that they were holding about 10 townspeople “hostage,” including a Roman Catholic priest. The “militant Indian group” had taken over the town, which was now sealed off by 90 officers. It was also reported that 16 adults and one juvenile had been arrested for their involvement as they tried to flee the vicinity. The article also provided background on the historical significance of Wounded Knee, referring to the original 1890 incident as a bloody battle that had brought an end to the fighting between whites and Indians in the Dakotas (“200 Indian Militants Seize Town,” p. A1, A4, 1973). References to AIM and the historic battle indicated that the occupiers were a group of insurrectionists who had chosen the site to make a statement about the war they had lost decades before. AIM leader Carter Camp, who was interviewed via telephone, promised that the occupiers would “die if necessary.”

The article also suggested that the group did not wish to inflict harm on their hostages. Camp said that the hostages hadn’t and wouldn’t be harmed by the Indians, though AIM would not free them until their demands had been met. Camp listed the demands as follows:

- “The Senate committee headed by Senator Ted Kennedy [Mass.] launch an immediate investigation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior for their handling of the Oglala Sioux nation.”

- “That Senator William Fulbright [Ark.] investigate the 371 treaties between the Federal Government and the Indians to show how the Government has failed to live up to the terms of the treaties. We can prove the United States never keeps its treaty commitments.”
- “That the Oglala Sioux be allowed to elect their own officials. Those now in office are just puppets. They need traditionalists” (“200 Indian Militants Seize Town,” 1973, p. 1A).

The Saint Louis Post Dispatch article did little to dispel the fear that the Indians were a danger to authorities. It explained that AIM had chosen to occupy the village’s Catholic church because its position atop a hill provided for good defense of the surrounding area. Camp told reporters, “We have men and the weapons to hold it” and that many of the Indians, were armed with “high powered” rifles. He continued, “[It] is symbolic that we have seized Wounded Knee and there is a definite threat that another massacre could occur here. We are not going to give in without a fight” (“200 Indian Militants Seize Town,” 1973, p. A1, A4). Though authorities had blocked all roads leading to the village, Camp told reporters that he expected other Indians from around the country to join AIM at Wounded Knee.

The *Saint Paul Dispatch* also published a similar front-page Dispatch News Service story that day. It also included information from Camp and added some statements from Mrs. Clive Gildersleve, the wife of the village trading post manager. Gildersleve painted a frightening picture of AIM’s intrusion on the village. She told the United Press International (UPI) that guns, ammunition, and artifacts had been stolen from her family’s trading post. However, the article also suggested that AIM may have been welcomed to come to Pine Ridge by the village’s Oglala Sioux (“AIM Takes Hostages,” 1973, p. A1). Subsequent *Dispatch* articles reported that AIM leaders

claimed to have been invited to the area by the tribe's "civil rights task force" (Lewis, 1973, p. A3).

The *Milwaukee Journal's* Press Dispatches (PD) article titled "Indians Seize Town in Dakota," added that the Indians had fired shots at approaching cars and that officers had exchanged gunfire with the Indians ("Indians Seize Town," 1973, p. 1A). The *Kansas City Star* outlined similar reports from U.S. attorney, William Clayton that sniper shots were being fired at the police from Wounded Knee's Catholic church. Both articles indicated that the occupiers were using firearms to intimidate police ("Indians Seize Dakota Town," 1973, p. 1A).

Camp's report to the South Dakota *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* conflicted with those of other newspapers. He said that the occupiers hadn't shot at people or cars. He claimed that if any shots had been fired, they had probably been a result of nothing more than weapons sighting ("200 Indians Seize Town," 1973, A1). Similarly, an article in the *Minnesota Dispatch* featured Camp's statement, "There has been absolutely no gunfire between the police and AIM" (Lewis, 1973, p. 2A). He also told reporters that the hostages wouldn't be harmed unless the police entered the village to try to "annihilate" the group. He said that the hostages were more afraid of police action than of the threat of danger from their captors. However, he added that they would not be released until Democratic Senators Kennedy and Fulbright came to Wounded Knee for negotiations. ("200 Indians Seize Town," 1973, p. 1A). Camp continued:

"If they come in here shooting, it's going to be pretty hard to distinguish between the Indians and white people. The hostages are in no danger from Indian people. But they're in the same danger if the law enforcement officials decide to invade" ("200 Indians Seize Town," 1973, p. 1A).

The story was not front- page news in *The Chicago Tribune* on Feb. 28 as it had been for the other mid-western publications discussed. The United Press International (UPI) story, which appeared in section B1, page 4 was titled, “Indians seize Dakota trading post, church,” was very different from the other articles in many ways. The *Chicago Tribune* didn’t refer to the occupiers as “militants,” but as “Indians,” and “people,” unlike some of the other regional coverage. It reported that the trading post and Catholic church had been “seized” by an undetermined number of “persons” and that federal marshals had reported sporadic gunfire, but did not mention snipers or shots fired at officials. In addition, the word “hostages” was not used, though the article reported that Wounded Knee “residents” had been barricaded inside their homes. It described the original Wounded Knee incident as a massacre, rather than a battle and said that AIM members were taking relics from various locations within the village to the Catholic church, where the massacre burial grounds were located. The article also attributed information to Mrs. Gildersleve, who had reported that 13 or 14 residents were barricaded in their homes with no lights, and that the police had surrounded the area, but had done nothing to evict AIM. In addition, BIA police had revealed that AIM coordinator Russell Means had been assaulted along with an elderly woman on the reservation earlier that week. *The Tribune* speculated that the incident may have led to the occupation. The article was different from the other mid-western coverage examined as it reported that AIM had seized just the Catholic church and trading post. It was more sympathetic to AIM than other mid-western newspapers as it avoided terms that labeled

the group as insurrectionists or militants and didn't suggest that the group was shooting at officials ("Indians seize Dakota trading post, church," 1973, p. 1B 4).

Agenda-building theory suggests that the amount of press attention placed on an event highlights its level of priority to the media, and in turn, the degree of its exposure to audiences. In this case, it would seem that the Occupation of Wounded Knee was very important to mid-western publications from its beginning. However, larger circulating publications seemed to take the event less seriously on its first day. Six of seven mid-western publications examined featured front-page articles about the event on February 28, including *The Des Moines Register*, *The Wichita Eagle*, *The St. Paul Dispatch*, *The St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *The Milwaukee Journal*, *The Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, and *The Kansas City Star*. However, the *Chicago Tribune* featured an article much smaller than the other publications examined, which appeared further back, in section 1B, page 4. *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* didn't feature any coverage of the story that day. The lack of coverage on a national level would indicate that the prestige newspapers initially considered the event less relevant, and that audiences outside of the mid-west were less informed about the event at its inception.

Despite the apparent interest of mid-western newspapers in the issue, there were several discrepancies and slants to the way the story was reported. For example, the *Kansas City Star* reported that snipers had been shooting at people and the *Milwaukee Journal* reported that Indians had exchanged gunfire with authorities and had shot at cars. Conversely, the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* and *St. Paul Dispatch* reported that despite rumors of gunfire, the Indians had insisted that no shots were fired. Also, both the *St.*

Paul Dispatch and *Chicago Tribune* reported that Means had been beaten by Wilson's followers, which may have triggered the take-over. The *St. Paul Dispatch*, which seemed much more sympathetic in its initial coverage, added that a 70-year old woman had also been attacked by Wilson's men.

The majority of the February 28 stories referred to AIM as a group of "Indians," rather than "militants," with the exception of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, which ran an AP article. According to framing theory, terms like "militant" would likely be used to paint extremist, or "aggressively active" images of the Indians. The purposes for such an image, or a frame could vary, according to the theory, but one could speculate that references to "militants" made it easier for readers to relate the story to frequent contemporary coverage about the Black Panthers, guerillas, and other violent activity. Later coverage in most of the newspapers would frequently use the term "militant." The *New York Times* usually referred to the group as "insurgents," or rebellious or dissatisfied, a term that seems to bear less of a negative connotation.

The majority of February 28 articles also reported that officials had taken no steps to "oust" AIM or to free the hostages. Whether the reports were implying that the FBI wasn't being proactive in liberating the hostages or whether the reports emphasized the cautious approach being taken by authorities is difficult to determine, though each paper reported the apparent inactivity of authorities. According to several reports, the situation was reminiscent of another recent event at Attica prison in which several people were killed in a government standoff between authorities and prisoners. The parallel between the events was drawn by several publications during and after the standoff.

An *Akwesasne Notes* article quoted Tom Murton, a criminologist from Minnesota, who claimed that the Indians were learning that authorities only responded when hostages were taken. He said:

“The problems have been the same for 100 years or more, but the minute they take hostages, the bureaucrats get on the plane and come out here to try to solve the problems. The question is, why didn’t they come last week, or last year?” (“It’s Not Very Promising, U.S. Officials Say,” 1973, p. 17).

The Department of Justice reported in its 1975 white paper on the event that law enforcement was highly aware of its public image when dealing with Wounded Knee and similar AIM confrontations such as the five-day occupation of the Washington DC BIA building by AIM in 1972. The white paper read, “The experience...had opened the eye of the leadership of AIM to the embarrassment and confusion militant tactics could cause the government.” The Department of Justice was wary that AIM would continue to use attention-getting tactics that would cause embarrassment for officials (Department of Justice, 1975, p. xiii).

Other commonalities with February 28 coverage were (a) the Gildersleve interview, (b) information about previous violent incidences involving the group in Custer and Rapid City, (c) background on the Wounded Knee Massacre, and (d) the demands listed by Camp. The original Wounded Knee incident was “top-of-mind” for many Americans because of the recently published, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (Brown, 1970). The popular book took a strongly sympathetic view toward Indians in its

description of the original Wounded Knee incident and raised awareness of Native American issues across the country.

March 1: Wounded Knee Attracts National Attention

By March 1, several nationally circulating newspapers had covered the story. A photo of Senators George McGovern and James Abourezk stepping off an airplane in South Dakota appeared on the cover of the March 1 issue of *The Los Angeles Times* with a caption reporting that the politicians were concerned about the safety of the hostages (“Concern for Hostages,” 1973, p. A1). An article in section A, page 16, of *The New York Times* also explained that Senator Abourezk, a Native American representative from South Dakota, had made a commitment to negotiate with AIM leaders, but only after the hostages had been freed. He said that he had been in contact with Senators Kennedy and Fulbright, whom AIM had originally requested to speak with, but didn’t yet know whether they would agree to participate. Abourezk, who’d had phone conversations with AIM leaders made the following statement:

“I’m personally willing to go anywhere to discuss any problem any group of Indians may have and to do everything in my power to remedy the legitimate problems facing the Indian people in my state and across the nation. But I am not willing to discuss substantive matters of legislation in a situation where a single group is seeking commitments on legislation under the threat of physical violence to innocent victims if that group’s viewpoint is not accepted” (“Armed Indians Seize Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A16).

The Saint-Louis Post Dispatch reported that federal officials were concerned with Abourezk’s safety in entering the village, though the senator refused to heed the warnings. He said, “Our main concern is to get the elderly hostages released.”

Additionally, he said that hearings on the Indians' demands would be held and that "Self-determination" was the proper way. He continued, "It's time for whites to stop telling nonwhites what to do" ("2 Senators Seek to Meet Indians," 1973, p. 1A). The senators said that they recognized the group's legitimate grievances, but Senator McGovern said of the situation, "These tactics used by AIM are not the way to move the people of America. I don't agree with what they did at Custer, the BIA office at Washington or at Wounded Knee, but we are willing to listen to what they have to say." The article reported that 250 officials were now guarding the village ("2 Senators Seek to Meet Indians," 1973, p. A1).

The New York Times featured two articles relating to the story by March 1. A UPI story was placed on the front-page along with photos of the Catholic church and an "Indian militant" wielding a gun. Other photos included hostage Clive Gildersleve and AIM leader Russell Means on the phone at the trading post. Like the *Chicago Tribune*, *The New York Times* reported that only the church and trading post had been occupied by the "embattled Indians," whose demands were being relayed to Washington ("Armed Indians Seize Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1).

The New York Times article reported that the militants were firing at photographers in low-flying planes, and that local airports had issued a warning to avoid the area. In addition, the report said that the militants had been firing at cars, including one carrying an Indian man with his wife and baby. They had apparently ignored AIM's warnings to stop their vehicle. Despite news of sporadic gunfire exchange with authorities, only one injury to an Indian man was reported. Dick Wilson told reporters

that the Indians were heavily armed with hunting rifles and possibly a machine gun. Wilson's accusation that the Indians were armed with automatic weapons was serious because weapons of that magnitude were difficult for civilians to come by at the time. Their access to such guns spawned rumors that the group held ties to Communist or other Anti-American groups. Wilson warned reporters that the group could and probably would hold out at Wounded Knee for weeks, if they were permitted to. *The New York Times* also reported that two armored vehicles with machine guns had been brought in by law enforcement ("Armed Indians Seize Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1). *The Chicago Tribune's* UPI story appeared in the third section. It featured a photo and reported that authorities wearing helmets had tried to advance toward the encampment, but had retreated after an exchange of gunfire with the Indians ("S.D. Sioux Hold 11," 1973, p. A1).

The Des Moines Register ran a very similar article to that of *The Chicago Tribune*. The article suggested that other Indians were flocking to the area to support the group at Wounded Knee, including a caravan from Des Moines. The group had been stripped of their weapons and turned away by officials at a roadblock ("Frisk D.M. Indians—Seize Guns," 1973, p. A1).

Other mid-western coverage indicated that gunfire had been exchanged between the occupiers and authorities before a ceasefire agreement had been reached. Clyde Bellecourt and Carter Camp claimed that only warning shots had been fired when cars and airplanes came too close to the village, according to an AP article in *The Wichita Eagle* ("Gunfire Punctuates Demands," 1973, p. A1). However, a *Minneapolis Tribune*

article reported that three people had shot at the plane of a UPI photographer attempting to take photos. The photographer contended that several bullets had hit the plane, but had caused no damage (“Indians hold hostages,” 1973, A1, A6).

The Wichita Eagle also gave a slightly different rendition of Carter Camp’s report that the hostages wouldn’t be harmed. According to the article, Camp indicated that the hostages wouldn’t be hurt as long as authorities didn’t come too close to the encampment, which was different from earlier reports that the hostages were in no danger from the Indians. The article also reported that Bellecourt and Means had admitted to having shotguns, rifles, hand-grenades, and explosives.

Another discrepancy in the *Wichita Eagle* was how the article reported the conflict’s catalyst. The *Wichita Eagle* reported a statement from Bellecourt that the occupation hadn’t been initiated by AIM, but by the Oglala Sioux Indians living on the reservation. However, it also reported that Dennis Means had indicated that the decision to occupy Wounded Knee had solidified after he was attacked by a group of Wilson’s supporters (“Gunfire Punctuates Demands,” 1973, A1).

The *Kansas City Star* included reports from an unidentified BIA official about gunfire exchange between police and the Indians. The BIA official reported that the occupants had initiated the confrontation when one of their cars had opened fire on a police blockade. The BIA official reported that police marshals had fired back, though another conflicting report from a different BIA official indicated that the marshals had not returned fire.

The *Kansas City Star* also included quotations from Wilson that AIM was a group of “chronic complainers” and “clowns,” and that he wanted them to be prosecuted to the fullest extent (“Indians Holding Out,” 1973, A1). A *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* article that day also included a statement from Wilson that there were only about 100 AIM sympathizers on the entire Pine Ridge reservation, and that most of the activists were from different states. Wilson told reporters, “They could only take over this reservation over my dead body” (“Abourezk, McGovern Arrive,” 1973, A1).

The *Kansas City Star* indicated that Senators Kennedy and Fulbright wanted to do everything they could to help free the hostages, but had no plans to visit Wounded Knee as they thought their presence would deter negotiations. Another article in the *Kansas City Star* reported that FBI agents had met with AIM leaders several times and that they had encouraged further meetings to discuss the liberation of the 11 hostages. Special assistant to the U.S. attorney general, Ralph Erickson told reporters that the FBI’s primary goal was to free the hostages as three of them were more than 80 years old, including one with a heart condition. Three others were in their late 70s, and one was a twelve-year-old girl. Three FBI agents were allowed on the premise when they escorted medicine man Fools Crow up to the village after trading post owner Clive Gildersleve had complained of heart trouble. The FBI spoke with AIM leaders while Fools Crow delivered heart medicine to the elderly hostage. According to the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, he said, “I don’t believe that these people would hurt us. They may act like it at times, they may get a little rough, but I don’t believe honestly that they would hurt us” (“FBI and Indians Confer,” 1973, p. A1-B1).

Although there were around 12 news reporters on site, Erickson said he wouldn't allow them to attend negotiations with AIM leaders. He also said that he could not comment on accusations that several television reporters had been held at gunpoint by federal marshals even after they had identified themselves, according to the *Kansas City Star* ("FBI and Indians Confer," 1973, p. A1-B1).

Reporters and photographers from the *Des Moines Register* were among the press that visited Pine Ridge to cover the story. Two stories on March 1 featured photos and interviews that were conducted with the local Oglala Sioux. A resident that was interviewed said that the problem had originated because of tension between half-blood and full-blood "traditional" Indians. According to the interviewee, the traditional Indians often accused half-blooded Indians such as Dick Wilson as being sell-outs to the American government. The interviewee, a mixed Indian, said that full-blooded Indians looked down on those who weren't pure Indians. Another interviewee, a Catholic priest who had been a missionary on the reservation for more than 12 years agreed that the dispute was largely due to tension between mixed and full-blooded Indians. Rev. Paul Steinmetz contended, "The full-blooded are more likely to be members of AIM, and thus firm believers in maintaining tribal culture and religion. The half-bloods are willing to accept white man's values...and thus the militants feel they are...an agent of the white man's Washington" (Heth, 1973, pp. A1, A13).

Wilson, who was also interviewed for another *Des Moines Register* article, commented that AIM "consists of nothing more than a lot of publicity" (Heth, 1973, pp. A1, A7). He explained that his office cooperated with the BIA in order to survive and

that most of the jobs on the reservation came from white-owned companies. Wilson also denied any separation between full-blooded and half-blooded Sioux. He stated, "We're the most united tribe in the United States" (Heth, 1973, pp. A1, A7).

The article reported that the majority of other residents interviewed had seemed apathetic or uninformed of the occupation. It's possible that this could have been out of fear of upsetting Wilson's office or a true disregard for AIM activities, as Dick Wilson had said the majority of the reservation felt. Good Woman, an elderly resident who was one of the few interviewed stressing a strong opinion on AIM said that she thought violence was the only way to solve the issue. She also expressed contempt for Wilson, stating, "Wilson wants to run everything his way, and its time to turn him out" (Heath, 1973, p. A7). In addition, Hobart Keith, tribal council member agreed that Wilson was "a real tyrant" and accused him of illegal use of tribal funding and equipment. He said of the Wounded Knee occupation, "They're trying to get legitimacy on the reservation. I don't believe in all their ideas, like destroying property. But you've got to destroy something to get those damn bureaucrats off of their Olympia aloofness" (Heth, 1973, p. A13).

The majority of March 1 articles had front page placement and referred to the AIM occupiers as "militants." *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *St. Paul Dispatch*, and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* all ran UPI articles that used the term "militant." In addition, AP and Post-Dispatch articles in the *Wichita Eagle* and *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* labeled the Indians as "militants." *The Milwaukee Journal*, which published a Press Dispatch article, was one of the few newspapers that covered the event and did not use the term

“militants.” In addition, articles in the *Kansas City Star*, *Minneapolis Tribune*, and *Des Moines Register* ran articles written by in-house staff that referred to AIM as Indians, rather than “militants.” However, the *Des Moines Register* and *Kansas City Star* ran other articles on March 1 by in house staff that did use the term. Mike McGraw, a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, used the term in one article, but not in the other. Both the *Kansas City Star* and *The Des Moines Register* quoted Wilson, though *The Register* also provided comments from other parties criticizing the leader, and its overall coverage was more sympathetic toward the Indians.

Wounded Knee Raises National Attention About Native American Issues

The *Los Angeles Times* featured three articles on March 2 about Wounded Knee. An editorial providing historical background about the treatment of Indian rights over the years was included. The editorial contended that AIM’s radical behavior might cost the Indians the sympathy they deserved, and hoped that the event would not detract from the legitimacy of the needs that the group expressed (“Wounded Knee, 1973,” 1973, p. B6). On the same topic, a *New York Times* editorial suggested that the nation focus its attention on revising current institutions, rather than dwelling on past injustices. “The Administration can do a lot to ease the present strain if it will carry out President Nixon’s own recommendation for greater tribal self-government” (“Return to Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. B34).

A *New York Times* article by John Kifner described white racism by residents of the Pine Ridge reservation, including remarks that he had encountered that were “in many

ways reminiscent of those made during the black civil rights struggle in the South” (“Indians Release 11 at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A36). *The New York Times* framed the Indians as victims in these first few days.

March 2-3: The “Hostages” are Freed, but Debate Ensues

March 2 brought freedom to the people being held at Wounded Knee, though not all of the so-called “hostages” left the village after they were permitted to go. Former captive, Father Paul Manhart, left the town and said that the other ten hostages had decided to stay even though AIM had given them permission to leave. Senators McGovern and Abourezk confirmed that the residents had remained in the village of their own will, according to an article in the *Des Moines Register*. McGovern reported, “They didn’t want to leave their homes. We offered to take the hostages with us, but they didn’t want to go” (Heth, 1973, p. A1). According to an AP article in the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, some of the former hostages were forced from their houses despite their decision to stay in the village. The article reported that AIM members had evicted 72-year-old Mary Pike in order to set up a command post in her living room. Pike was moved to the Gildersleve home (“Abourezk, McGovern Arrive,” 1973, p. A1). *The Kansas City Star* reported that the hostages were free to go outside, but were required to have AIM escorts if they wished to move around the compound.

McGovern also told the *Des Moines Register* that he saw few weapons around the compound despite the rumors that the Indians were heavily armed. He also criticized the significant destruction that he had seen in the town. He said, “I deplore it. It’s

outrageous and I think it serves no useful purpose” (McGraw, 1973, p. A2). A March 3 article in *The Chicago Tribune* indicated that McGovern had seen many more weapons when visiting the compound a second time (McGraw, 1973, p. A2).

McGovern and Abourezk along with Senators Kennedy and Fulbright met with AIM leaders and scheduled times for continued talks. In the first meeting, the senators reported that the situation became intensified when AIM leaders got word that the home of fellow leader Aaron DeSersa, had been fire-bombed. It was reported that his wife had been injured in the bombing. McGovern said that AIM leaders seemed very disturbed by the situation, and said that the incident, “underscores the danger that exists here.” A *Kansas City Times* article quoted DeSersa, who had snuck from the village to his damaged home, “I feel some people are going to die here” (McGraw, “FBI, Sioux Escalate,” March 3, p. A6).

Reports of peace talk results were limited, though the senators announced that their primary focus was to free the hostages rather than open up other negotiations with AIM. *Kansas City Times* coverage indicated that Abourezk had agreed to meet with BIA officials in Washington regarding AIM’s claims of corruption within the institution in addition to launching an investigation at Pine Ridge. He also said that Fulbright was considering an investigation by his Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding treaty violations with Native Americans. Abourezk said of the Indians, “They have some legitimate grievances” (McGraw, “FBI, Sioux Escalate,” March 3, p. 6A). The senators also said that AIM leaders seemed to expect that they would face charges for their involvement and didn’t inquire about amnesty, though they had asked what kind of

sentencing they would receive and the amount of bail that would be posted, according to the story in *The Register*. The Senators advised the group to meet with the Department of Justice to discuss their potential punishment.

A *St. Paul Pioneer Press* article on March 3 reported that Russell Means had agreed to negotiate if the leaders of the group would be the only AIM members subject to arrest (“Indian Talks Not Productive,” March 3, pp. A1, A2, C5). The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* reported that the sporadic gunfire that had been persistent since the beginning of the occupation had stopped on Thursday evening after the Senators had negotiated a cease-fire between both sides. The second meeting to discuss AIM grievances was scheduled in a tepee located in a demilitarized zone between AIM and federal blockades (“Hopes for Quick Peace With Indians Dwindle,” March 3, pp. A1, A8).

The *Kansas City Star* reported that the press was ignoring warnings from the police against entering. At least one news team had gotten past federal barricades, though the press was still banned from meetings. It added that 15 carloads of reporters had tried to follow the Senators to their meetings with AIM leaders, but had been turned away by authorities (McGraw, “Sioux Grievances Factional, Too,” March 4, pp. 1A, 4A). *The Chicago Tribune* indicated that reporters who didn’t get into the compound would have to rely on information given to them by the government. One article said that by March 3, “Only one press pool car was allowed past the federal barricades each day, so the rest of us had to sneak in if we wanted to know more than the daily government press release told us” (Sneed-Long, “Looking for Indians at Wounded Knee,” April 15, Sect. 9, p. 48).

Erickson told reporters on March 3 that Wounded knee was still a “volatile situation,” and authorities would continue to block the press from entering indefinitely according to the *Kansas City Star Tribune*. In an article by Michael McGraw, *The Kansas City Times* reported that Erickson referred to negotiations with AIM as grim and said that he had not ruled out the possibility of using force to move them. “We have some very serious conditions that concern us all. We may have to rethink the whole thing pretty soon” (“FBI, Sioux Escalate,” McGraw, 1973, p. A1). The article also indicated that Erickson doubted that amnesty would be a possibility for the Indians. He said, “It’s not a negotiation as to whether they will be placed under arrest. Naturally if there are violations there will be charges and arrests” (“FBI, Sioux Escalate” McGraw, 1973, p. 6A). However, an article written by the same author in the *Kansas City Star Tribune* the day before indicated that the possibility of amnesty hadn’t been ruled out. The article reported, “Erickson said amnesty for the Indians holding Wounded Knee would be considered, depending on how the situation evolves. He said a U.S. attorney will be present to determine if Indians trying to leave the reservation will be arrested” (“Indians’ Hostages Choose to Stay On,” McGraw, 1973, p. A2). A March 3 *St. Louis Post Dispatch* concurred with *The Kansas City Times* article that Erickson had ruled out the possibility of amnesty. He said that arrests were certain, though the conditions of the arrests could be negotiated. Reports on the topic of amnesty varied, though each newspaper used Erickson as the source of their information.

In many ways, the *Kansas City Times* article on March 3 was more critical of the situation at Wounded Knee than the March 2 *Kansas City Star*. One discrepancy in the

reporting was whether the hostages were truly free to go, due to an alleged statement made by Mrs. Gildersleeve. The first of the articles was based on a Justice Department statement. It described a telephone call made by Gildersleeve in which she told a friend that she and her family were still being held at gunpoint against their will after AIM had announced that the hostages were free. The Justice Department said it could not fairly assess whether she was forced to lie about the situation because part of her family was still in the village being guarded by AIM. Erickson said, "I'm not satisfied that Mrs. Gildersleeve is not a hostage" ("FBI, Sioux Escalate," 1973, p. A6). The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that AIM attempted to clear up the dispute by bringing three of the former hostages to the FBI to confirm their freedom including Father Manhart and a 12-year-old girl. Reporters that had snuck past police into Wounded Knee indicated that some of the hostages were more frightened of the FBI and federal marshals than of the Indians themselves. The reporters also said that the Indians were heavily armed, but cordial ("Indian Talks 'Not Productive,' 1973, p. A1). A March 4 article in the *Saint Louis Post Dispatch* reported that the Indians had seemed friendly, though they were checking visitors closely ("Leader Says Sioux Nation May Attack," 1973, p. A1, A5).

On March 2, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* and *St. Paul Pioneer Press* described the Indians as "friendly," and implied that the hostages weren't really afraid of the militants. Conversely, *The Kansas City Star* wrote that it was possible that the hostages weren't really free. AIM was portrayed in that article as a dangerous group of kidnappers who could be forcing the hostages to lie about their freedom.

According to *Akwesasne Notes*, Alice Kellogg, a reporter from Newsweek hiked into the village, she had apparently been told by one alleged hostage, a Native American who was preparing breakfast for the occupiers at the time, “We’re hostages—and we like it. We get along just fine” (“..And then the U.S. Senators Came...,” 1973, p. 15)

The article also quoted a letter that had been written by one of the Gildersleeves to Eugene Meyer of The *Washington Post*, which read:

“I am afraid the Government has put off too long the just recognition of a truly fine race of people. Mr. Meyer, I do not like the long-haired militant Indian, the ones who use foul language and ornament their clothing with a variety of choice four-letter words. But I am beginning to understand why they do it” (“..And then the U.S. Senators Came...,” 1973, p. 15).

Despite the obvious bias that *Akwesasne Notes* would have as a Native American publication, it seemed to provide objective reports. One example was the detailed reports from some of the scared, elderly residents that were at Wounded Knee when it was overtaken. However, the article explained that the Indians had assured authorities and hostages that there was no real threat to the people being held there. The article said of the Senators’ visit to Wounded Knee, “Whether Abourezk was interested in helping the Oglala occupation force to gain their objectives or not is unclear” (“..And then the U.S. Senators Came...,” 1973, p. 14). It went on to say, “McGovern too seemed more concerned with the safety of the white hostages than peaceful resolution of the situation” (“..And then the U.S. Senators Came...,” 1973, p. 14). The article explained how confused authorities had been upon learning that the hostages didn’t want to leave

Wounded Knee once they were freed and also implied that there was a sense of frustration because, “Law enforcement people also needed the hostages to press charges against their ‘captors’ to partly justify the massive federal military-like presence” (“...And then the U.S. Senators Came...,” 1973, p. 15).

According the *The Kansas City Star*, Erickson reported that officials would continue to hold the five-mile perimeter around the village. Barricades were moved to within half a mile of the village, but officials wouldn’t allow cars near them. Aaron DeSersa told reporters that the group felt trapped by the police surrounding Wounded Knee, but he believed that reinforcements, including 1,500 supporters, would break through and “free” those trapped inside. However, Justice Department spokesman Horance Webb reported that no effort was being made to patrol Indians moving in and out on foot. *The Kansas City Star* continued to portray the group as extremely dangerous, speculating that AIM had at least one M60 machine gun or an automatic rifle in their possession (“FBI, Sioux Escalate,” 1973, p. A1, A6).

By March 3, gunfire between authorities and AIM had resumed, according to *The Los Angeles Times*. DeSersa told reporters that AIM would participate in a shoot-out if evoked by authorities. Conversely, Erickson told reporters that police roadblocks had actually been under attacked. He said that armed personnel carriers had been moved to roadblocks as a “purely defensive” measure in response to three separate alleged shooting incidents in which AIM had fired on FBI agents, BIA police, and nearby cars. He continued to express concern about the rumored machine gun in AIM’s possession, and said that his meetings with AIM leaders on March 2 had been unproductive.

AIM Supporters Face Threats and Violence

AIM had requested lawyers from the attorney general, and said that they wanted legal advice before surrendering, according to the March 3 *Los Angeles Times*. DeSersa indicated that the Indians would consider giving up, but wouldn't submit to arrest. AIM leaders told Senator Abourezk that AIM supporters especially feared incarceration in Pine Ridge because of the physical dangers that threatened them there from bitter local authorities and vigilantes (U.S. Not Ruling Out Assault on Indians," 1973, p. A1).

The *Los Angeles Times* also included more detail regarding the firebombing of DeSersa's home on March 1 in an article that was highly sympathetic toward AIM. In an interview with reporters, DeSersa said that he had walked 10 miles from Wounded Knee to his home on Pine Ridge after hearing that his home had been attacked. His house had suffered great damage, and his wife had been burned while rescuing their seven-year-old daughter from the flames. The firebomb was thrown into the window of the young girl's room as she was getting ready for bed, killing the child's puppy. DeSersa blamed Wilson's supporters and said, "I now declare an all-out war on Dick Wilson" ("Indian Division Reflected in Burned House," 1973, p. A13). A March 3 *New York Times* article reported that DeSersa's wife had allegedly received several threatening phone calls from Wilson's followers that day. Wilson denied the charge. He stated, "I'm a law abiding citizen." The article speculated that DeSersa had been the target of the assault because he had been editor of the *Shannon County News*, a weekly publication, in which he had routinely accused Wilson of corruption and nepotism ("Indian Division Reflected in

Burned House,” 1973, p. A13). On March 4, the *Kansas City Star* reported DeSersa’s estimate that in his first year of office, Wilson had misspent \$250,000 in federal funding (“Sioux Grievances Factional,” 1973, p. A1). \$250,00 was the amount of federal funding received by the reservation annually, according to a March 4 article in the *Chicago Tribune*. Allocation of the funds was for the most part dictated by the tribal council and chair, Dick Wilson. DeSersa also complained of low wages for Sioux handicrafts and artifacts with exponential overhead at local businesses, the majority of which were white-owned (“Indian Division Reflected in Burned House,” 1973, p. A13). The *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Kansas City Star* all portrayed DeSersa as a victim of hate by Wilson’s followers. *The Los Angeles Times* reported, “DeSersa is a quiet man who does not seem prone to overstatement” (“Indian Division Reflected in Burned House,” 1973, p. A13).

A March 3 article in the *Chicago Tribune* added that DeSersa had indicated that the BIA building in Pine Ridge would be another AIM target. He said that the group planned to march to Pine Ridge and that they would be accompanied by as many as 1,500 reinforcements from other states and Canada (U.S. Official Calls Wounded Knee Situation Grim,” 1973, p. A3). This report portrayed DeSersa as more of an aggressor than a victim.

AIM Supporters Advocate From Outside of Wounded Knee

AIM leaders who weren’t at Wounded Knee continued to support the group in other ways. For example, AIM leader Vern Bellecourt sought help from the United

Nations, according to the March 2 *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*. The article included a colorful description of Bellecourt's visit to the U.N. building in an attempt to speak with secretary general Kurt Waldheim. It described how Bellecourt, clad in traditional Indian braids and blue jeans, walked into the United Nations and said jokingly, "You're completely surrounded. If you give up peacefully you'll be all right," ("Indians Ask U.N. for Help," 1973, p. A1). According to the article, Bellecourt was friendly in his approach and was only kidding about the hold-up, though a demonstration was taking place outside of the building. Bellecourt and several other AIM supporters spent 45 minutes speaking with C.V. Narasimhan, chief aide to secretary general Waldheim. Bellecourt requested that UN observers travel to Wounded Knee to help protect Indian rights and property. They claimed that Native Americans had a right to be seated in the UN as a sovereign nation in order to express their grievances. Narasimhan promised that he would relay the requests to Waldheim upon his return to the office from Paris ("Indians Ask U.N. for Help," 1973, p. A1).

Press Reports Continue From Wounded Knee

A March 3 *Minneapolis Tribune* article reported that Dennis Banks had helped to sneak several reporters past enemy lines because he wanted to prove to them that no-one was being held at Wounded Knee by AIM against their will ("Banks Denies AIM Held Hostages at Reservation," 1973, pp. A1, A4). While the reports seemed to confirm that there were no longer hostages within the village, several of the reports created negative publicity for the group, such as an article in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* that included a

UPI photo of a completely defunct trading post that “angry” Indians had allegedly ransacked. Pictures of the barricaded Sacred Heart church and armed guards throughout the compound were also published (“Indian Talks Not Productive,” 1973, p. A2). A photo of two armed Indians in the sanctuary of the Sacred Heart church ran in the *Minneapolis Tribune*. The caption read that Indians had participated in mock ceremonies there. Father Manhart told reporters that he bore witness to AIM’s alleged disrespect for the Church, when his hands were tied behind his back and he was brought up to the choir loft of the church. There, he watched as his captors pushed pews aside and danced around to drum music. Banks denied the accusation, claiming that none of the hostages had ever been held there against their will. Erickson had told reporters that he would charge AIM with kidnapping, which in South Dakota held the mandatory sentence of life in prison with the possibility for parole after 17 years. Banks told reporters, “I can see two or three years imprisonment, but there’s no way I’d do 17” (“Banks Denies AIM Held Hostages,” 1973, pp. A1, A4). The *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* quoted Banks on March 4, “It’s my life those pigs are talking about. If they think I’m going to compromise away a lifetime in the penitentiary, they’re nuts” (“Village Siege End Hinted,” 1973, p. A1).

Mrs. Gildersleeve told reporters in Wounded Knee that she had never been a hostage, according to a March 3 *Argus-Leader* article. She was staying in Wounded Knee to protect her property (“Hopes For Quick Peace Dwindle,” 1973, p. A1). Incidentally, Gildersleeve and four of the other alleged hostages, who were half Indian, discovered that they were distant relatives of AIM leader Clive Bellecourt during a

conversation with him (“Banks Denies AIM Held Hostages,” 1973, pp. A1, A4). Banks’ story that the Gildersleeve and the others had never been hostages contradicted with earlier *Argus-Leader* reports. In one AP article, Gildersleeve reported that an armed Indian had come to her house and said, “I don’t want to scare you folks but I want to tell you that you are our hostages from this time on. You cannot go out of this house” (“Indians Holding Wounded Knee Headquarters,” 1973, p. A1). The Department of Justice also indicated that on March 2, Mrs. Gildersleeve telephoned Jim Czychuski, a part owner in the trading post, and had said, “I may not have been a hostage yesterday, but I certainly am now.” Czychuski reported the conversation to authorities. The report caused the Justice Department to question the validity of AIM’s claims about whether the hostages were really free. In a March 4 article in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, alleged hostage, Wilbur Riegert told reporters, “The fact is that we, as a group of hostages, decided to say to save AIM and our own property. Had we not, those troops would have come down here and killed all of these people” (“‘Breakthrough’ Seen at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A1). Again, *The St. Paul Pioneer Press* portrayed AIM as a non-threat to the hostages and indicated that they were more frightened of authorities than of AIM. *Akwesasne Notes* speculated that Erickson had helped to “escalate” the conflict along with the media with his statement that he didn’t believe the hostages were really free, despite assurances that they were from the hostages themselves (“It’s Not Very Promising, U.S. Officials Say,” 1973, p. 17).

The Situation Between AIM and Authorities Intensifies

A March 4 article in *The New York Times* reported that tension between officials and AIM had peaked. *The Times* article cited information from Erickson that “20 rounds” had been fired at an armed personnel carrier, breaking a cease-fire pact that the Indians had agreed to keep unless their roadblock boundaries were being crossed. According to Erickson, the carrier returned fire as it threw a canister of teargas into the Indian compound. AIM argued that the carrier had provoked the fight by moving in and throwing the gas into the Indian entrenchment before shooting. The Indians then set a brush fire to drive the carrier back. Horance Webb, US marshal force, said that the carrier was probably defending itself, but didn’t confirm what order the events had occurred in (“Marshals Trade Fire With Indians,” 1973, p. A1, A42). A *Saint Louis Post Dispatch* article issued the same day did not present the Indians’ view of what had happened with the personnel carrier. The article reported that “most firing was coming from the Indian positions” (“Leader Says Sioux Nation,” 1973, p. A1).

According to *The New York Times*, authorities were also increasing the number of roadblocks and tightening security around the compound in response to Indians attempting to exit the area. Four Indians were arrested as they fled, and were charged with burglary, larceny, and assaulting federal officials, according to Webb. He added that the occupiers might face further federal charges because the events had occurred on Indian reservation grounds. Officials said they would only negotiate the terms of the surrender but not sentencing (“Federal Force Rings Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A6, A13).

The six lawyers requested by AIM arrived at Wounded Knee on March 3. The *New York Times* reported that AIM, along with a spokesman for the hostages and a group of clergymen, had drawn-up an agreement for the Justice Department and alleged hostages. In exchange for their surrender, AIM demanded that authorities refrain from making mass arrests as occupiers vacated. Clergymen would bear witness to the transaction in order to ensure a peaceful exit for the Indians. AIM agreed to make restitution for any damaged property. AIM leaders would agree to submit peacefully, but refused to agree to the kidnapping charges (“Federal Force Rings Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A6, A13).

March 4 coverage in the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* seemed optimistic about the possibility of a final resolution to the conflict. The article, “Village Siege End Hinted,” reported that both the Justice Department and AIM leaders seemed to be in “conciliatory” spirits. A cease-fire agreement had again been reached, and the Justice Department had removed the armed carriers as part of the accord. Allegedly, about 40 or 50 rounds had been fired by the Justice Department at three Indians approaching a bunker the night before (“Village Siege End Hinted,” 1973, p. A1). Robert Enstad in the *Chicago Tribune* on March 4 seemed less optimistic. He wrote, “Most believe the boiling point is near and practically no one believes that bloodshed can be avoided” (“Tribal Politics a Big Issue,” Enstad, 1973, p. A29).

Negotiations Continue as Supplies and Morale Dwindle

Diminishing food and ammunition supplies encouraged the Indians to continue negotiating toward a peaceful resolution. A March 4 *Argus-Leader* article reported that the last remaining phone line in village was also out of service. AIM began slaughtering several of the cows that belonged to residents of Wounded Knee for food (“Village Siege End Hinted,” 1973, p. 1A). A March 5 *New York Times* article illustrated the conditions in the village. It included an interview with a Sioux youth, who was on duty guarding the compound. The stock of his rifle had been broken and was only being held together with tape. He only had one bullet left. He told reporters, “I guess if they come I should shoot myself” (“Wounded Knee Is a Tiny, Armed Camp,” 1973, p. A5). The *Milwaukee Journal* also reported on March 4 that Means had told AIM occupiers to “hold up discipline” and not to waste shots because of the ammunition shortage (“Sioux Threatens to Attack Militants,” 1973, p. A3).

Reporters Frame The Issues on the Pine Ridge Reservation

Mike McGraw, a *Kansas City Star* reporter observed, “The entire feud, which pits brother against brother and cousin against cousin, smacks of petty squabbling, at least on the local level, with thousands of docile Sioux as the pawns” (“Sioux Grievances Factional, Too,” 1973, p. A1). Bylined articles like McGraw’s tended to more blatantly reflect editorial opinions than those written by press associations. McGraw’s opinion was obvious in his use of the words “docile” and “pawns” and his implication that most reservation Indians had no active interest in the reservation politics that governed their

lives. However, McGraw was critical of both sides. He chastised Erickson and the Justice Department for increasing their fire and manpower in the area after the hostages had been freed. While Erickson had originally claimed that his main mission was liberate the hostages, by March 4, he announced that the department's "new" purpose was to arrest the AIM leaders who had taken the village under siege. The contradiction raised questions about Erickson's priorities throughout the highly public conflict ("Sioux Grievances Factional, Too," 1973, p. A1). McGraw seemed neither pro-Indian nor pro-government, though his portrayal of reservation Indians as simpletons was especially harsh.

News analysis written by civil rights reporter Robert Enstad was published frequently in the *Chicago Tribune*. On March 4, Enstad wrote, "But, the average Oglala doesn't care about the treaties or congressional investigations. He is generally happy on the reservation and goes out of his way to be friendly to the white man" ("Tribal Politics a Big Issue in Sioux Dispute," 1973, p. A29). Enstad's frame of the Oglala Sioux paralleled that of McGraw. Enstad also contended that, "Attempts by AIM to gain Indian support by attacking the white man and treaty violations do not appear to be a winning strategy" ("Tribal Politics a Big Issue in Sioux Dispute," 1973, p. A29). Enstad quoted 71-year-old Chief Iron Cloud to support his point. Iron Cloud, who had been a life-long resident of the reservation, said, "This is what the spirit is today. I don't like it. We made peace. We have gotten along like brothers and sisters with the white man. Why do we have to have this? What are our children going to think?" ("Tribal Politics a Big Issue in Sioux Dispute," 1973, p. A29).

Enstad's statement that the average Indian on the reservation was "happy" was especially interesting. According to a March 5 article in the *New York Times*, the high-school dropout rate in Pine Ridge was 63 percent and there were at least two suicide attempts per year among high-school-aged children. In addition, Pine Ridge possessed an abnormally high murder-rate, an extremely low employment rate, and rampant alcoholism ("Wounded Knee is a Tiny Camp of Indians," 1973, pp. 4, 26). A March 16 article in *The Los Angeles Times* reported that only half of the 3,000 employable men and women on the reservation had full-time jobs, and a quarter didn't work at all. The article indicated only three main employers on the reservation: the White-owned moccasin factory, the US Government, and the tribal government ("Home of the Sioux: a Defeated People," 1973, p. A1, A12). McGraw and Enstad both painted the reservation Indians as "docile" simpletons that were unaware of their substandard conditions.

A March 4 press service article in the *Kansas City Star* seemed to possess less biased coverage, but generalized that while "most" of the Pine Ridge Oglala Sioux disagreed with actions taken by AIM, many agreed with their overall goals. The article indicated that the community was upset that AIM had held Native Americans as hostages ("Sioux Grievances Factional," 1973, p. A1). A March 1 *Des Moines Register* article also suggested that AIM might have lost favor among Indians because they took a priest hostage. Another clergyman interviewed for the article explained that the Catholic Church was widely respected on the reservation because Catholicism had been present there since 1888 ("Key to Siege: Rift Within Tribe," 1973, p. A13).

Dick Wilson Speaks to the Press

Dick Wilson, who was accused by AIM of using his connections with the predominately White-run BIA to advance his political career, seemed to agree that it was in the Indians' best interest to cooperate with government agencies. However, his solution, which seemed to be the total elimination of the uncooperative element, differed drastically from Iron Cloud's peaceful ideology. Wilson told reporters that a band of angry Pine Ridge Indians with "800 to 900" guns were ready to attack the occupants at Wounded Knee, according to the March 4 *Saint Louis Post Dispatch*. Wilson's estimate of the size of the group at Wounded Knee was about 200, though a lawyer visiting the site had estimated the numbers between 400-500. Wilson said that he had cooperated with federal authorities and was sure they were doing all they could. He and "his people" would refrain from attacking the Indians if AIM's lawyers seemed to be making progress with the negotiations (Leader Says Sioux Nation May Attack Militant Indians, 1973, p. A1, A4). According to a March 4 article in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Wilson postponed the attack that was allegedly scheduled for that day. He indicated that the attack could occur if negotiations failed to take place in a timely manner. He said, "If necessary, I will join them with my gun," and predicted that, "AIM will die at Wounded Knee." In accordance with his earlier claims that he was a "law-abiding" citizen, Wilson then said that he and his followers would submit to authorities if they tried to prevent the attack. It is obvious that authorities would have tried to prevent an all-out battle between the Indians factions, but Wilson may have been implying that AIM would be attacked as soon as authorities weren't there to protect them. He may also have been attempting to

prove that he still had power over the situation, though the Government had excluded him from their decisions during the event. ("Leader Says Sioux Nation," 1973, p. A1).

Reports about Wilson's statement differed. According to the March 4 article in the *Chicago Tribune*, Wilson had disclosed his plans in a press conference arranged by the Justice Department ("Elected Sioux Leader," 1973, p. A1). Conversely, a *Los Angeles Times* article the same day, reported that Wilson had called the press conference himself. According to the article, Ralph Erickson had no comment in response to Wilson's statement, and "appeared surprised" with Wilson's claim. Wilson said that he couldn't "hold back" his followers from attacking AIM, but said he would decide whether the attack would take place, according to *The L.A. Times*. The statement added to the existing tension, according to the article ("Sioux Threatening to Attack Militants," 1973, p. A1). Both articles reported that authorities had asked Wilson not to comment on the situation, and the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Wilson had specifically named Senators Abourezk and McGovern among the parties who had requested that he not speak out on the issue ("Elected Sioux Leader," 1973, p. A1).

Press Blackout and Poor Communication Cause Unrest

A March 4 article in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* by Dorothy Lewis reported a press blackout at Wounded Knee. AIM sympathizers had called the paper to inform them that authorities had also cut the last phone line to Wounded Knee to prevent the group from contacting the press. In addition, they claimed that radio news broadcasts from local stations had been jammed, and that an increase in security to prevent reporters from

entering the area had been enforced ('Breakthrough' Seen at Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1).

On March 5, it was apparent that Indians and authorities had experienced difficulties communicating with one another, perhaps aggravated by the lack of a telephone connection. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that federal authorities and AIM leaders had both announced peace plans to the press without corroborating with one another. There was a major discrepancy between the plans about the way AIM would leave Wounded Knee. The Justice Department's plan stipulated that the occupants would be permitted to exit without arrest if they surrendered all of their weapons, provided the department with the names of all male occupiers, and vacated the premises immediately. Erickson said that lawmen would leave as soon as AIM members had vacated, and that the proposal stood whether or not it was accepted by the Indians. The Indian plan was written after AIM leaders had met with William Kunstler, the famed civil rights attorney from New York. The occupiers did not want to leave the village, and they requested that their arraignments be held within Wounded Knee. They also wished to negotiate for supplies and be permitted to have other members of the civil rights movement to join them in the village. According to the *Saint Paul Dispatch*, AIM made eight new demands in addition to the three made when they first occupied the village. Means emphasized that AIM wished for the impeachment of Dick Wilson before the group would surrender.

Erickson's plan called for the Indians to be arraigned in Rapid City, South Dakota, where a grand jury would decide appropriate sentencing. He said that there

would be no arrests if the village was vacated peacefully, and he provided a ten-hour window in which the Indians could leave, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* ("Indians Offer Peace Plan," 1973, p. A1). According the March 5 *New York Times*, the group could also face charges from tribal authorities ("Wounded Knee is a Tiny Camp," 1973, p. A26).

The Milwaukee Journal reported on March 5 that AIM leaders had burned the Justice Department's proposal upon receiving it as their supporters cheered them on. Justice Department officials declined to comment on AIM's proposal, but announced that peace talks would continue. Means and Banks did not attend initial peace talks when they discovered that Erickson would be absent (S. Dakota Indians," 1973, p. 1A). "We decided the Indian people are more important to us than jail terms," commented Carter Camp, according to the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* ("Indians Reject Plan," 1973, p. A1). The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the group announced that they were done dealing with the Justice Department. "We'll deal with them later in the field with guns and violence," Camp said. The group had originally requested to speak with interior secretary Roger C.B. Morton, who oversaw the department of Indian affairs. He failed to meet with the Indians at their request ("Want Meeting With Morton," 1973, p. A1).

The lack of effective communication between all authorities present at Wounded Knee seemed to greatly hinder the quick resolution of the issue. Wilson was especially disappointed that he had not been consulted before federal officials made a peace offer, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. His response was, "The Justice Department has completely failed again." When asked if he would continue restraining "his people" from

attacking Pine Ridge, Wilson said, "Restraints are off as of this moment" ("Indians Offer Peace Plan," 1973, p. A1-A2). The *Chicago Tribune* reported on March 5 that Wilson had said that his followers were "busy shining their rifles" ("Indians Get Offer from U.S.," 1973, p. A3).

Poor Conditions and Supply Shortages Ensur at Wounded Knee

On March 5, heavy snows fell on Wounded Knee. A medical team allowed into the village reported that at least ten people were seriously ill, including infant children with pneumonia, according to a *St. Paul Dispatch* article. Federal officials announced that additional medics would be allowed to visit the village the next day. The team that treated patients on March 4 had been seeking permission to enter the village from Gov. Richard Kneip for several days. Officials agreed to permit anyone requiring medical attention to leave Wounded Knee with medics and be re-entered in after treatment ("Medical Team Treats Ailing," Lewis, 1973, p. A3).

On March 5, *The New York Times* indicated that the Indians did not have automatic weaponry, as the Justice Department had suggested. The Department had claimed that the Indians had mounted a machine gun to the back of a truck or van that they were patrolling around the compound. It was necessary therefore to bring armed personnel carriers to the site for self-defense, they said. John Kifner, reported in a *Times* article that the accusation brought "howls of laughter" from some of the Indians and that their response was, "Wish we did" ("Wounded Knee Is a Tiny Armed Camp," Kifner, 1973, p. A26). Kifner reported that most of the arms were shotguns, rifles, and Molotov

cocktails made in soda bottles that were probably too thick to explode. Kifner wrote that many of the Indian camp guards were just children in danger of injuring themselves due to their lack of experience. Several young guards were sent to do dish duty when they were caught mishandling their weapons. He also reported that the armed carrier had fired on three teenagers attempting to sneak up on the vehicle, though the shots were only fired over their heads. The article reported the Indians were fearful of vigilante white ranchers roaming outside the Indian barricades. Kifner's article humanized the Indians and portrayed them as non-menacing ("Wounded Knee Is a Tiny Armed Camp," Kifner, 1973, p. A1, A26).

Tom Wicker's March 8 New York Times article "Attica and Wounded Knee" described the rumors that Indians had machine guns as "scare stories." Like the rumors that circulated during the Attica incident, where several inmates occupying a prison yard were said to have explosives, Wicker suggested that the stories were fictional and only intensified an already severely heated situation ("Attica and Wounded Knee," Wicker, 1973, A39).

Coverage Varies As Negotiations Continue

Ralph Erickson was "mildly optimistic" that an agreement would be reached with AIM leaders as reported in the March 6 *St. Paul Dispatch*. He told reporters that a new peace offer from the Indians looked promising, though the department couldn't accept the proposal in its entirety. Part of the new offer asked that officials stay in the vicinity to help protect the group from attacks that had been threatened by Dick Wilson. The

Indians had maintained that they would not vacate until there was assurance from the Department of Interior that tribal reforms would be made ("Hope Held For Peace," 1973, p. A1). In addition, a proposal to purchase the trading post and 40-acre Wounded Knee land in order to create a co-op for Sioux Indians was drawn up with the assistance of Kunstler. Lawyers involved in the dispute were also scheduled to meet with Department of Interior officials that day, according to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ("Sioux Seek U.S. Assurances," 1973, p. A3).

The *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* reported that Department of Interior assistant general council, Charles Soller met with AIM leaders on March 5. He announced that the group's request to set aside the tribal constitution and make a referendum was highly unusual, and that the request would be passed along to Washington ("Indians Reject Plan," 1973, p. A1).

Erickson expressed disappointment that none of the Indians had left the premises once the offer to leave without arrest had gone into effect, according to *The St. Louis Post Dispatch*. AIM leaders said they viewed the offer as an ultimatum that essentially said, "leave now, or we will force you to leave." They told reporters that it was reminiscent of the way US soldiers had disarmed Chief Sitting Bull before killing him (AIM Says 'No,' 1973, p. A1). However, two young male students from New Mexico left the camp when Erickson extended the offer to the next day. They said they had hitchhiked to Wounded Knee to see "what was going on," and didn't know whether any of the others would accept the offer to leave, according to the *Los Angeles Times* ("First Indians Leave, 1973, p. A2).

Robert Enstad's March 6 *Chicago Tribune* article again provided dramatic coverage of the story. Other article headlines that day seemed more optimistic. The *St. Paul Dispatch* read, "Hope Held for Peace With Indians," (p. A1) the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* headline was, "Federal Officials Optimistic About Peace at Wounded Knee," (p. A1) and the *Los Angeles Times* headline was, "First Indians Leave Wounded Knee as Peace Talks Resume" (p. A2). The *Chicago Tribune* article indicated that the standoff would continue with the headline, "Rebel Indians Hold Settlement" (p. A3). The *New York Times* headline, "Federal Offer is Spurned by Indians as Talks Go On," (p. A30) at least indicated that the groups were attempting to negotiate a resolution. Rather than emphasizing Erickson's statement that he was optimistic about the Indian counter-offer, as many of the other articles had, Enstad chose to focus on the conflict, beginning his article with "It was a standoff between the militant Indians and federal government here tonight on the Oglala Sioux reservation." Enstad did, however, include a brief mention about Erickson's report that progress was being made and that negotiations would continue ("Rebel Indians Hold Settlement," Enstad, 1973, p. A3). Enstad framed the Indians as rebels and portrayed a bleak situation at Wounded Knee.

AIM leaders continued to use dramatic measures to attract media attention. Leader Carter Camp admitted that burning the government proposal and returning the ashes back to officials was "a bit dramatic," according to *The New York Times*. But, he and other AIM leaders contended that their original grievances hadn't been adequately addressed. While officials seemed optimistic about negotiations, 15 more armored vehicles had been shipped to a nearby town incase they were needed. However, officials

let up their guard for reporters, who had previously been barred and occasionally held at gunpoint. While registering their vehicles, Justice Department officials now made “small talk” with reporters, according to the article (“Federal Offer is Spurned,” Kifner, 1973, p. A30). *The New York Times* suggested that the press was dissatisfied with news blocks and portrayed officers as rough authoritarians who flexed their power by intimidating reporters with their guns.

The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* was pessimistic about the possibility of resolution. The Justice Department had broken off peace talks, requesting that the Indians present them with a significantly revised proposal. Erickson had said that the department was denying the first three of the demands, including (a) the request to speak with the highest official at the Department of Interior, (b) that tribal council be suspended and Wilson dismissed, and (c) that three Indians arrested earlier trying to exit Wounded Knee be freed and returned (“Progress Reported, 1973, p. A1). One of the three was William Means, 26, the brother of AIM leader, Russell Means. In addition, it was reported that 500 rounds of ammunition had been exchanged during the night, despite a cease-fire agreement made between Indians and officials. It was the greatest use of armaments that had been reported since the start of the incident. “They have refused to deal with us. We are calling off the cease fire,” said Dennis Banks after peace talks had ceased, according to *The New York Times* (“Indians Given Till Tonight,” Kifner, 1973, p. A6).

Coverage in *The New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* on March 7 emphasized the dissention between officials and AIM leaders. The *Chicago Tribune* report, “U.S. makes ‘final offer’ to Indians” (p. A3) featured photos of the two Indian students who

had left under the government agreement two days before and explained that the government would no longer negotiate with the Indians if their “final offer” for a peaceful solution was denied. Erickson allegedly declined to say what measures would be taken against AIM if they refused the government offer, but said, “We will continue to try to resolve this without bloodshed” (“U.S. Makes Final Offer,” Enstad, 1973, p. A3). A March 7 *Los Angeles Times* article reported, “It is impossible to determine the exact nature of the government’s offer from Erickson’s statement” (“Sioux-Federal Talks,” Nelson, 1973, p. A13). Though Erickson said he was awaiting revisions from Roubideaux on AIM’s revised proposal, it was unclear what the government had proposed aside from the three grievances Erickson said would not be addressed. He said that it was now up to the Indian leaders to end the conflict (“Sioux-Federal Talks,” Nelson, 1973, p. A13).

The New York Times article, titled, “Indians’ Truce Ends as Talks Collapse,” also described the tension that was continuing to grow in the village. Banks had reported that the Indians would “increase their activity” by expanding the area guarded by occupier checkpoints. He said the expansion was in response to the presence of an armored carrier and police gunfire at a family that was attempting to return to their residence within the village (“Indians’ Truce Ends,” Kifner, 1973, p. A50). In a *Los Angeles Times* article, Bruce Nelson reported a “spirit of gloom” in Wounded Knee that day. “There’s no sense in playing the game any longer,” said Russell Means, according to Nelson’s article (“Sioux-Federal Talks Appear Near Collapse,” Nelson, 1973, p. A13).

Influence of Tribal Government

On March 8, Erickson told reporters that he and Charles Sollar of the Interior Department, had met with AIM's lawyers, who agreed to work with the Indians to create a "final proposal." "We've gone as far as we can go; we can go no further," said Erickson, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* ("Indians Expect Assault by U.S., 1973, p. A1). Ramon Roubideaux reported that the Indians were attempting to collect some 1,100 signatures from the reservation to have Wilson impeached. According to Roubideaux, the petitions had already been signed weeks ago, but were scattered throughout the reservation. According to the *Argus-Leader*, Soller had indicated to Roubideaux that the Interior Department might consider AIM's request to oust Wilson if the group could prove "wide dissatisfaction" with Wilson. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that some Pine Ridge officials had said that it was unlikely that the Department would revoke the constitution as it was a guarantee of self-government by the Indians on the reservation. AIM argued that the policy took power away from the Indians and gave absolute power to the BIA and Wilson ("Wounded Knee Indians," 1973, p. A1).

The New York Times article also provided an overview of how the tribal government structure had come into effect. The 1934 Congressional Act had passed the Indian Reorganization Act, which allowed reservations to be self-governed by elected officials. However, AIM claimed that the system was dominated by whites and promoted the assimilation of Indians into a white society. Native languages were banned from schools and children were beaten if they came to school wearing traditional Indian outfits. Aside from the apparent downfalls of the system, Native Americans now enjoyed

the possibility for strengthening Indian leadership within their tribes. Though corruption and contradiction within government policies often didn't foster growth, with the exception of those willing to cooperate with government agencies like the BIA. *New York Times* reporter John Kiffner interviewed an anonymous Bureau of Indian Affairs officer that criticized AIM's suggested revisions and suggested that the overthrow of the tribal government had the potential to destroy the entire reservation system ("Indians' Truce Ends," Kifner, 1973, p. A50). Nelson's *Los Angeles Times* article also indicated that overthrowing the tribal government would be illegal ("Indians' Truce Ends as Talks Collapse, Kifner, 1973, p. A13).

Dick Wilson announced that the top official at the Interior Department would be traveling to the area per his request to investigate the events at Pine Ridge. Though AIM had also requested to meet with the same official, their request was denied. A separate editorial in the paper explained that the Interior Department had no jurisdiction to oust Wilson unless it could be proven that there was a total break down of the government ("Wounded Knee Indians 'Are Prepared To Die,' 1973, p. A1). Hank Adams, an AIM chief negotiator with the National Council of Churches, told reporters that there had been cases when the government had suspended tribal government under an extreme case, according to a *Kansas City Star* article ("Wounded Knee Talks Break Off," 1973, p. A1).

Dennis Banks told reporters that the group would just negotiate the purchase of the land from its owners and stay in the area, if negotiations failed, according to the *Kansas City Star*. Clyde Bellecourt told reporters, "I'm not worried about it. I think the

negotiations will reopen soon. We've got too much national support for the government to risk another massacre" ("Wounded Knee Talks Break Off," 1973, p. A1).

Occupiers Expect Invasion and Press Further Draw Attica Comparison

Women and children began evacuating Wounded Knee, and some of the soldiers said they were "prepared to die" in the village, according to a March 8 *St. Paul Dispatch* article. Federal authorities said that negotiations would not continue, and encouraged women and children to continue leaving, including permanent residents of the village. Several of the children who left suffered from respiratory ailments, according to reports. The Indians told the press that they were preparing for an attack from the government. Erickson told reporters on March 7 that AIM leaders were being unreasonable. He said they were "...bent on one of two courses—total capitulation by the U.S. government to their illegal demands or violence." He said that the demands amounted to "...nothing more than intolerable black-mail." Soller also rejected the Indians' demands, as they contradicted law and U.S. policy. Rev. Ralph Abernathy, head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference visited the village to announce his support for AIM ("Militants 'Prepared To Die' in S.D., Ciccone, 1973, p. A1).

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* had a more positive report on the situation. Lawyers mediating between the groups announced that progress had been made during negotiations. However officials also announced a 7:00 p.m. curfew for nonresidents, making it apparent that they wanted AIM supporters out of the area ("Progress Reported In Talks at Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1). Three more armed personnel carriers had

been brought into Wounded Knee, totaling six, according to *The Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* (“Wounded Knee Indians ‘Are Prepared To Die,’ 1973, p. A1).

The Star restated Erickson’s view about the possibility of amnesty for the group.

He said:

“There has been some misunderstanding of our offer not to arrest nonresidents pending action of a federal grand jury. Some have interpreted this as a gesture of amnesty toward law violators. Let me say once and for all there never was any amnesty, there is no amnesty and there never will be any amnesty” (“Wounded Knee Talks Break Off,” 1973, p. A1).

Erickson reported that he was going back to Washington as he could see no further negotiations taking place. The new government official in charge of negotiations was Charles Abalard, assistant deputy attorney general. Erickson told reporters that the situation looked “grave,” and that passage out of the village for non-residents without the threat of arrest would end at 6:00 pm on March 9 (“Wounded Knee Talks Break Off,” 1973, p. A1). Conversely, the *Wichita Eagle* reported that Banks had said, “The door of negotiation will remain open on our end” (“Peace Pipe Cool at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A2).

Wilbur Reigert, the 80-year-old hostage who had told reporters earlier that he and other alleged hostages had stayed in Wounded Knee of their own accord to help dissuade a government attack, told reporters as he left the village on March 8, “AIM is here to see that they either win or die. I don’t want to die with them,” according to the *Wichita Eagle* (“Peace Pipe Cool at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A2). The other nine original hostages had remained in the village, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (“Indians Expect Assault by U.S.,” 1973, p. A1). *The New York Times* reported that when AIM

leaders learned of the government ultimatum, a meeting was called in which residents voted to stay in the village despite the danger (“Indians Given Till Tonight,” Kifner, 1973, p. A1).

Enstad continued to be pessimistic about a peaceful solution in his March 8 *Chicago Tribune* coverage. He reported, “A lengthy Justice Department statement, which strongly implied that the situation might finally be resolved by gunfire, called on the militant Indians to send all women and children, both residents and nonresidents, out of Wounded Knee tomorrow.” This interpretation of Erickson’s announcement was different than that of other March 8 coverage. Other reports indicated that Erickson still planned to solve the conflict without violence. According to the *Kansas City Star*, Erickson said, “We remain committed to make every effort to solve this matter without bloodshed.” Enstad, who did not reveal his source, wrote that the “reported” government battle plan was to first demand via loud speaker that all occupants leave. If occupiers ignored to warnings, Enstad reported that the next step was to infiltrate the village with teargas dropped by low-flying planes and personnel carriers. The last step was to invade the village using armed forces, according to the report (“U.S. Makes ‘Final Offer’ to Indians,” Enstad, 1973, p. A3).

New York Times coverage on March 8 was also pessimistic. It featured the statement made by Erickson before leaving again for Washington. He said, “All of this may sound very melodramatic, but I assure you this is no melodrama. The failure of agreement on a peaceable solution—after every effort on behalf of the United States Government—has created a very dangerous situation” (“Indians Give Till Tonight To

Leave Wounded Knee,” Kifner, 1973, pp. A1, A18). A separate *New York Times* article by well-known reporter, Tom Wicker contended, “...it isn’t too late for the government to prevent a situation such as the one that occurred at Attica...what is so important about the secretary of the Interior that he should not go personally to Wounded Knee to try to expedite a settlement?” It argued that the Justice Department should have continued negotiations, rather than trying to force their resolutions on the Indians. He wrote, “Negotiations themselves are generally thought to be a process in which both sides modify their positions until agreement is reached. But just as at Attica, the side with the most power has handed down something near an ultimatum” (“Attica and Wounded Knee,” Wicker, 1973, p. A39).

Negotiations Resume After Injuries Spur Cease-Fire Agreement

Negotiations began again on March 9. Washington had announced that they agreed “in principle” with the peace pact submitted to them by AIM (“Attica and Wounded Knee,” Wicker, 1973, p. A39). However, the department also reported, “certain critical procedural matters are yet to be resolved,” according to the *St. Paul Post Dispatch* (“Wounded Knee Nears Accord,” 1973, p. A1). A cease-fire issued in Washington ended sporadic gunfire that had been exchanged between authorities and occupiers throughout the day and the evening before. An Indian man was shot in the hand and taken away in an ambulance requested by the group. An article in the *Argus-Leader* reported that another had been shot in the leg (“Indians Say They Won’t Allow Battle,” 1973, p. A1). Dennis Banks reported the cease-fire to occupiers and missed

some of the March 9 negotiations because he was traveling around the village perimeter telling his men to hold their fire, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. AIM lawyers said they had been negotiating via phone with authorities in Washington about the cease-fire agreement. The negotiations reportedly resumed when the Department of Justice announced that they would continue their commitment to end the event without violence. Erickson held that the Department would prosecute the offenders, but said they would not try to take the village by force. He urged the occupiers to “come to their senses,” set down their arms, and leave the village peaceably for the sake of the “innocent people” inside. Federal officials maintained their refusal to impeach elected official, Dick Wilson (“Talks Resumed By U.S., Indians,” 1973, p. A1).

The *Wichita Eagle* reported on March 9 that the Indians preferred the peace plan drafted by the National Council of Churches. AIM lawyers had met with a former presidential advisor to help them work out the details of the plan. The proposal called for a clergy-monitored cease-fire, food and supplies for parties still in Wounded Knee, and an agreement for Indians to disarm if the government agreed to launch a top-level investigation of AIM’s grievances. The Indians were also still asking for the release of the three parties had been arrested as they attempted to leave Wounded Knee to bring a wounded Indian to the hospital. Russell Means commented that the proposal “puts the burden of renewing the negotiations back where it belongs; on the government” (“Talking Resumes At Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A1). Banks said, “We will use restraint rather than let this have a violent ending,” according to the *Argus-Leader* (“Indians Say They Won’t Allow Battle,” 1973, p. A1).

AIM leaders took serious issue with the government demand that the Indians lay down their arms. Banks said, "If we leave without weapons we might get stepped on. We won't leave in any way that is dishonorable, that casts dishonor on Indians," according to the *Argus-Leader* ("Indians Say They Won't Allow Battle," 1973, p. A1).

Outsiders Get Involved

Nation-wide support for AIM was also being demonstrated by religious and political leaders, according to the *Wichita Eagle*. A telegram from state representatives and senators was sent to President Nixon to encourage a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Civil Rights groups across the country held demonstrations. Senator Edward Kennedy called for the Justice department to withdraw their armored vehicles and for the Indians to disarm voluntarily ("Talking Resumes At Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1).

A *Kansas City Times* article announced that the United Nations had denied the Indians' request that a representative from the organization be sent as an observer to help protect the rights of the Native people. A spokesperson for General Secretary Kurt Waldheim reported that the organization could not interfere with matters of domestic jurisdiction. Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, Marvin Franklin, whom the Indians had requested come to the village to help settle the dissatisfaction with tribal leadership, had also agreed to meet with Indians, but only after a peaceful resolution of the take-over was complete ("U.N. Refusal," 1973, p. A6).

The New York Times reported on March 10 that additional initiatives to impeach Dick Wilson were circulating among AIM supporters in other parts of Pine Ridge.

Gerald One Feather, “traditionalist” predecessor of Dick Wilson, rallied for Oglala Sioux to support the impeachment. He was attempting to get seven of the 20-member tribal council to resign so that Wilson would fail to have a quorum. This would mean that the tribal government could be dissolved. The group was also working toward the abolition of the tribal constitution, which they claimed was not representative of traditional Sioux values. The article reported that continued political turmoil was “embarrassing” for government negotiators. In addition, complaints from tribal council were expressed. According to Lloyd W. Eaglebull, secretary for the council, the tribe took no responsibility for the outcome at Wounded Knee since they had been granted no authority to help resolve the dispute (Accord Is Reported at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A13).

Reverend Wesley Hunter, one of the clergymen who had helped to hash out the proposal, reported that press would no longer be allowed into the village because it was believed that the media would hinder final negotiations, according to the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. The article was pessimistic that an agreement would be reached quickly because each piece of the proposal would be announced and negotiated individually, according to Hunter (“Indians Want U.S. Agents Out of Village,” 1973, p. A2). A March 10 article in *The New York Times* reported that “reliable” sources had informed reporters that one of the proposed items was an agreement for non-residents to turn over their weapons to clergy-manned posts. The arms would be tagged and returned to their owners at a later time. As the Indians exited the village, they were to stop at FBI-manned posts where they would provide authorities with their names. Clergy would observe to make

sure the occupiers weren't interrogated. In addition, clergy would bear witness to any detentions, arrests, and arraignments associated with the event ("Accord Reported," 1973, p. A1). In a March 9 article in the *Los Angeles Times*, Justice Department spokesman John Hushen, told reporters that he thought no-one would be coming out of Wounded Knee until the terms in the 15-point plan developed by the National Council of Churches had been agreed upon ("Talks at Wounded Knee," 1973, pp. A1, A16).

Shots Fired Despite Peace Talks

Not surprisingly, Enstad's March 9 *Chicago Tribune* coverage focused on a shootout that occurred, rather than on continued peace talks. His article, "Indians attack roadblock at Wounded Knee; 1 shot," described injuries sustained by occupiers ("Indians Attack Roadblock," Enstad, 1973, A3). Coverage in *The New York Times* questioned whether the injured Indians had been shot by officials or by armed ranchers, who had reportedly been wandering the proximity of the village. The origin of the shots was never officially confirmed ("U.S., Indians Reach Cease-Fire," 1973, pp. A1, A14).

The cease-fire agreement announced on March 8 was broken again that evening, according to a March 9 article in the *Los Angeles Times* ("New Gunfire Breaks Out," Nelson, 1973, p. A1, A16). On March 10, *The New York Times* reported that the fire had taken place near the Trading Post in the center of town, and that automatic weapons had reportedly been used, though no injuries were reported. The machine gun rumored to be in the village, a Czech-made AK-47 actually had "been seen here," though most Indians were armed with rifles ("Accord Reported at Wounded Knee," Kneeland, 1973, p. A1).

A photo that accompanied many of the March 9 articles pictured a young Indian man raising a weapon over his head and smiling in celebration of the cease-fire “accord” that was later broken (“U.S. Announces Accord,” 1973, p. A1). The *Akwesasne Notes* featured the same photo with a different caption. While general interest publications had said that the man was celebrating the cease-fire agreement, the *Akwesasne Notes* caption read, “Proud in the defense of Wounded Knee” (“When Would the Massacre Start, Oglalas Wonder,” 1973, p. 28).

There were several conflicting reports about the status of peace talks on March 9. Some articles indicated that both sides were further from agreement than had been earlier announced. On March 9, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that despite the positive announcement made by government officials that an accord had been found, Roman Roubideaux announced that negotiations were again “stalemated” (“New Gunfire Breaks Out,” Nelson, 1973, p. A1). However, an article on March 10 in the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the progress in negotiations had given the Indians “the strongest hope yet that any repetition that the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre would be averted.” The Indians seemed to be in good spirits. One man joked, “If we hold out long enough, you think that Bob Hope may pay our troops a Christmas visit?” according to a March 10 article in the *Los Angeles Times* (“Talks at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A1, A16).

As negotiations continued, Hushen announced that 50 people had been arrested for their involvement in Wounded Knee. He said that the outcome of their sentencing would be part of the negotiations. He added that it was possible that they would be charged with obstruction of justice. However, the arrests did not dissuade others from

attempting to enter the village. It was reported that a light plane carrying supplies had landed in the center of town near the trading post. In addition, a local 14-year old boy had guided 39 more Indians into the camp by hiking 6-miles and evading police blockades ("Talks at Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1, A16).

Personnel Carriers Removed Despite Continued Conflict

The Indians expressed apprehension about surrendering their arms because it threatened their honor and safety. Conflict with authorities also continued as AIM attorney, William Kunstler, was not permitted to enter the village. He spent the day at a federal roadblock while attempting to replace AIM's chief negotiator, Roman Roubideaux. "The Justice Department doesn't know what this action is all about. They're too busy to sit down and learn what the problems really are," Robideaux commented, according to a March 10 article in the *Chicago Tribune* ("Wounded Knee Talks," Enstad, 1973, p. A3). He said that an agreement had almost been reached when the government began changing everything around and demanding specific dates for withdrawal, according to *The St. Louis Post Dispatch* ("Indians Want U.S. Agents Out," 1973, p. A2).

One of the main problems, according to Robideaux, was that federal officials weren't making themselves clear to the "uneducated" Indians who didn't understand the legal terms used by the government. A major communication problem resulted. Robideaux also said that the government did not understand that the action of the occupation epitomized Indian frustrations and desires to reform the system on a national

level. However, he announced that the group was attempting to negotiate. They removed their request for Dick Wilson's impeachment and suspension of tribal council and constitution in their formal negotiations, according to the *St. Paul Register* ("Indians Seek Court Order," 1973, p. A1). However, *The New York Times* reported on March 10 that the group was still demanding to speak with the top-ranking Interior Department official. The article reported that Roubideaux would attempt to get a court order to have federal agents around the village removed ("Accord is Reported," 1973, p. A13).

Banks and Means announced that several issues had been settled, but that there were many more issues that needed to be worked out before Indians would surrender. Means told reporters, "We are very close to an agreement with the Justice Department, but we are still worlds away from an agreement with the Interior Department," according to a March 10 article in the *Wichita Eagle* ("Disagreements' Stall Wounded Knee Talks," 1973, p. A2).

On March 11, *The New York Times* reported that federal guard points and personnel carriers surrounding the village had been withdrawn in accordance with an agreement from both sides. AIM leaders took the withdrawal as an apparent victory. "We have won this war. But there are more wars to come," Dennis Banks told AIM followers. Federal officials contended that they didn't want the situation to turn into another Kent State or Wounded Knee 1890, and had therefore let up on the security surrounding the village. However, one marshal reported that federal forces wouldn't be completely dismantled until the Indians were disarmed. The article also indicated that there had been some kind of compromise on the part of the Indians to persuade officials

to let up their guard. Erickson stated, "We are doing this because we believe this is the proper step at this point in moving toward a peaceful resolution. Furthermore, many of our law enforcement objectives have already been accomplished" ("Morton Insists U.S. Won't Yield," 1973, p. 56). A March 11 article in the *Los Angeles Times* added that these objectives had been the liberation of the hostages and an agreement of restitution with the parties whose property had been damaged ("U.S. Ends Blockade," Meagher, 1973, p. A1).

Wilson Blames Press, Department of Interior Blames Government and AIM

Banks announced to fellow occupiers that federal officials had agreed to "do something" about Wilson, his followers, and other white people that had been attacking the Indians. He said that they would help to patrol the reservation. However, officials announced that tribal police would go back to performing their normal duties. Wilson made statements criticizing coverage of the incident in "the white man's newspapers," according to *The New York Times*. He said that the coverage had glorified "anarchy" rather than providing an accurate depiction of all of the efforts made by authorities and tribal leaders to solve the problem ("Morton Insists U.S. Won't Yield," 1973, p. 56).

On March 11, statements from secretary of the interior, Rogers C.B. Morton and assistant to the Secretary for Indian Affairs, Marvin Franklin appeared in *The New York Times*. Both blamed the government for failing to live up to its social and moral responsibilities in its policies with Native Americans. Morton promised to continue efforts to help American Indians overcome poverty. However, he disagreed with the way

radicals such as AIM protested, contending that the Indians ignorantly believed that their causes transcended the law. He said that they didn't "represent a constituted group which whom the government can contract or can serve." He said that the Department of Interior would refuse to bend to the threats of AIM, but that they would continue providing programs to help Indians "climb out of the bottom of the social barrel" ("Morton Insists U.S. Won't Yield," 1973, p. 56).

Indians Feel Misled and Welcome the Press

Shortly After AIM began celebrating its "victory," the group claimed that it had been tricked by officials after learning that the US would still pursue indictments against some AIM leaders. Federal officials announced that 60 cases relating to Wounded Knee would go before a federal grand jury on March 12, according to the March 11 *Los Angeles Times*. Officials reported that they had arrested 74 people in conjunction with the occupation. After AIM leaders announced that they would stay in the village indefinitely, officials responded that it had become clear that there was no agreement. However, officials said that they hoped the removal of roadblocks would help to prevent bloodshed. Apparently, the decision to remove forces had been delayed because they had been gathering evidence to present before the grand jury. Chief U.S. Marshal Wayne Colburn announced that officials would be allowed to enter the village to investigate. However, Carter Camp rebutted the announcement, saying that if any officers entered, "We might just arrest them," according to the *Los Angeles Times* ("U.S. Ends Blockade," Meagher, 1973, p. A1).

On March 11, newsmen were allowed by AIM back into Wounded Knee, against the advice of officials and clergymen. The *Argus-Leader* reported that the Indians waved the reporters into the village ("S.D. Removes Forces From Wounded Knee," Ciccone, 1973, p. A1).

Tensions Flair and Indians Claim an Independent Nation

The next day, several newspapers indicated that tensions had once again flared up and that an agreement was far from being reached. Officials began to restore the roadblocks that had been dismantled the day before. Indians at Wounded Knee announced their secession from the United States and warned that if officials entered the village, it would "be treated as an act of war and treated accordingly," according to a March 12 article in *The New York Times*. A Justice Department spokesman said that authorities were attempting to keep the situation calm and peaceful. He said that agents were ordered not to shoot unless in self-defense ("F.B.I. Agent Shot as Indians Warn U.S.A.," Kovach, 1973, p. A1).

In addition, it was announced that an FBI agent was shot and an Indian injured in an apparent skirmish. According to authorities, shots were fired from a vehicle at the agent, who was hit in the wrist while sitting at a checkpoint with his partner. According to AIM's spokesperson, it was the agents who had shot at the vehicle first, and the Indians inside returned the fire. One Indian was cut by a piece of flying glass. Federal marshals with riot gear, M-16s, and gas masks reported to the area shortly after the shooting. Armored personnel carriers also reentered the area. According to the article,

more than 300 officers were immediately called to the site. The article framed the Indians as the instigators, and emphasized their unwillingness to cooperate with authorities ("F.B.I. Agent Shot as Indians Warn U.S.A.," Kovach, 1973, p. A1).

The story about the FBI agent shot in the wrist differed in *The Akwesasne Notes*. It provided both versions of the story, but explained that the Indian driver of the van said the police car had put on a siren, so he was about to pull over, when the officer put an M-16 out the window and fired at the van. That's when the chase ensued and the officer on the passenger side was hit in the wrist with a bullet, according to the article. Other newspapers hadn't mentioned that the driver had planned on pulling over ("Oglala Sovereignty Reaffirmed," 1973, p. 32).

The New York Times also reported that six white men had been detained at Wounded Knee by AIM leaders. It was not confirmed whether any of the detained men were government officials, but the article said that a "government source" suggested that at least two of the men were postal inspectors who had tried to gain entrance to investigate alleged mailbox burglary. A photo showed the six men with their hands over their heads while an Indian with a gun stood nearby. The men were held for two hours and then brought to a dirt road by eight Indian guards where they were ordered to march one by one to their cars (F.B.I. Agent Shot as Indians Warn U.S., Kovach, 1973, p. A1). "They didn't come here to protect no mail boxes," said Banks, according to the *Argus-Leader*. Officials reported that the detainment and earlier shooting increased the likelihood of an armed confrontation. Arms appeared to be increasing in the village. Officials trying to enter the village to investigate damage to government property were

turned away by Indians. Again, AIM's unwillingness to cooperate with the government was emphasized ("Peace Hopes Dimmed," 1973, p. A1).

The Indians also began plans to establish their own government, according to the article. One of their first priorities was to raise ten million dollars for a monument to the Indian people. Dennis Banks announced, "This is a chance to prove we can do it. That we can act like Indians" ("Peace Hopes Dimmed," 1973, p. A1).

Officials denied comment on the situation. Public information officers for the Department of Justice left the premises and were replaced by Interior Department spokespeople. A government official in Pine Ridge announced that arrest warrants had been issued for Dennis Banks and Russell Means by U.S. Magistrate, Jim Wilson, according to the *L.A. Times*. The *Times* article indicated that they would be charged with obstruction of justice ("FBI Man," 1973, p. A9). A *Chicago Tribune* article also reported that Charles Abelard had indicated that seditious conspiracy charges might also be brought against the leaders ("FBI Agent is Shot," 1973, p. A1, A2). When asked about the charges, Banks replied that the issue was "moot" because he was now part of an independent nation, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. He said that grand jury subpoenas would be ignored. He also said that he did not care if the top-ranking Interior official ever showed up as they had originally requested. He said that the group had been informed when a resolution was almost reached that the Department of Interior official would arrive within 24-hours. When that did not happen, the group began to expand their own roadblocks and to increase the amount of smuggled arms present in the village ("FBI Man," 1973, p. A9). "We're going to have to be a lot more hard-nosed about this than we

were before. We have gotten no reasonable response and have no reason now to expect any reasonable response,” said federal marshal chief, Wayne Colburn according to a March 13 article in *The New York Times* (“U.S. Again Blocks Roads,” Kovach, 1973, p. A1). According to *The New York Times*, an Interior official told AIM leaders, “I have been instructed to tell you that because of what has happened, the government does not feel you have been negotiating in good faith and there is no reason to have a meeting today.” No further meetings with the department were scheduled (“U.S. Again Blocks Roads,” Kovach, 1973, p. A1).

The *Chicago Tribune* added that the agent was shot in a high-speed chase, a detail that had been left out of other coverage from the Tribune wire service. The article added that the Indian who fired the shots reported that agents had fired first at their van and had chased them at 60-miles-per-hour. “I think the FBI was attempting to provoke the situation,” said Banks. By adding Bank’s view that police had instigated the incident, the wire service article appeared to be more representative of AIM’s view than previous *Chicago Tribune* articles by Robert Enstad (“FBI Agent is Shot,” 1973, p. A1).

Officials Hope to Out-Wait Occupiers as Supplies Diminish

When the grand jury met in Sioux Falls to determine charges against the 72 parties arrested for their involvement in the Wounded Knee take-over on March 12, spokespersons for the Department of Interior still had no comment for the press, and no talks had been scheduled with AIM leaders, according to the *Argus-Leader* (“Peace Hopes Dimmed,” 1973, p. A1). However, *The New York Times* reported that, “There

were clear indications that Federal officials believed that because of the new barriers, hunger would cause the Indians to surrender.” When reporters asked Colburn whether he believed a lack of food would encourage the Indians to leave, he replied, “Sure as hell we’re planning to change their life-style” (“U.S. Again Blocks Roads,” Kovach, 1973, p. A1). According to the *Washington Post*, in addition to implying that they would block out food and medical supplies, Colburn also indicated that government would cut off heat, water, electricity, and telephone services, though on March 14, he said that water would not be turned off. He added that while officials would try to avoid violence, the possibility of “forced entrance” hadn’t been ruled out. The weather turned to snow on March 13. The Indians would have to endure colder conditions and rain (“U.S. to Seal Indians In, Cut Supplies, 1973, p. A4).

Officials discovered that the Indians had taken advantage of the time available to them when police blockades were down. Erickson once again sealed off the village because he discovered that during the lapse, the Indians had collected more weapons and supplies and had recruited more supporters to the area, according to the *Washington Post*. Officials reported that about 150 new people had entered the village when restrictions were off, and there had been an increase in the amount of young whites with weapons in the area, according to reports from inside. Officials added that drugs were also being used in the village, and believed that they would help to degrade the new community that the Indians had formed. Conversely, a March 13 article in the *Washington Post* reported that the new nation was outlawing drugs and alcohol. In addition, the group had declared that non-Indians were no longer allowed to live in the society. The group said that they

were acting under the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, in which the government had promised Native Americans domain over territories west and east of the Missouri River, including part of South Dakota. The treaty also ensured that the government would provide education for the Indians (“U.S. to Seal Indians In, Cut Supplies, 1973, p. A4).

Chicago Tribune Editorial Says AIM Has No Standing Among Oglalas

On March 13, an editorial column in the *Chicago Tribune* argued, “The American Indian Movement has no standing as representatives of American Indians. It consists of a small group of resolute individuals with a flair for publicity and no scruples” (“The Issue at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A10). According to a March 13 article in the *Argus-Leader*, Rep. James Abdnor encouraged officials to arrest and prosecute the Indians. He contended that this action could likely “be accomplished by force.” He added that AIM was using fear and intimidation and that the news media was not accurately reporting on the situation. He said that if the occupation was allowed to continue, other groups would feel like they had free rein to participate in demonstrations like AIM’s (“Authorities Reseal Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A1).

Dick Wilson and the tribal council also worked to remove all non-Oglala Sioux that had come to the reservation to support the Indian group. *The New York Times* reported on March 14 that Wilson had announced that the council was retaking control of the reservation and that they would remove outsiders from the reservation whether or not the government approved (“Indian Council Acts to Oust Outsiders,” Kovach, 1973, p. A32).

Despite earlier reports that the Indians no longer wanted to negotiate with the Department of Interior, *The New York Times* reported that Russell Means did want to meet with an official, but would not leave the premises to negotiate. The official also refused to enter the armed village, so the meeting had failed to take place. The Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department did, however, send representative Harington Wood into the village for further negotiations. The talks were described as “friendly,” and the groups agreed to continue negotiating (“Indian Council Acts to Oust Outsiders,” Kovach, 1973, p. A32). The *Chicago Tribune* reported that John Adams, a representative of the National Council of Churches, had also joined the meeting. The Tribune article, titled, “Marshals tighten noose around Wounded Knee,” reported that neither side had comments for the press about any progress that had been made in ending the confrontation. It did, however, report that 15 personnel carriers had surrounded the perimeter (“Marshals Tighten Noose Around Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A3). Wilson told reporters that he had been assured by Wood that negotiations would not continue for very long, according to the *Argus-Leader* (“Oglala Council Wants,” 1973, p. A1). However, *The New York Times* attributed Woods with getting the stalemated negotiations flowing again. He had also been involved in negotiations between AIM and authorities in the 1970 occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay. It was reported that he was in contact with AIM attorney Richard Kleindienst, to help develop a new agreement (“Indian Council Acts to Oust Outsiders,” Kovach, 1973, p. A32).

Indictments Made/Officials Criticized as Conditions Worsen

The grand jury came back with an unknown number of indictments on March 14, despite attempts to stall deliberations by AIM lawyers, who claimed that some of the government information collected was a result of illegal surveillance and that the jury had been selected improperly. These arguments were dismissed by U.S. District Judge, Fred Nichol, according to the *Argus-Leader*. In addition, it was reported that McGovern had announced that he believed it was time for the arrest of the four main leaders of the group, including Banks, Means, Bellecourt, and Camp. Abourezk also announced that he was canceling hearings of the Senate Interior Subcommittee on Indian Affairs (“Wounded Knee Talks To Resume,” DeVine, 1973, p. A1).

Severe blizzards also stalled scheduled peace talks with the Department of Interior, the *Argus-Leader* reported on March 15 (“Wounded Knee Talks To Resume,” DeVine, 1973, p. A1). Due to reports of several serious medical conditions, two doctors were permitted into the village with medical supplies. They predicted that if conditions worsened, a pneumonia outbreak in the village was likely to occur. Dennis Means told reporters that he thought the Indians could survive with of the food they had and that they could endure the harsh conditions. He said that endurance made his people stronger and more likely to win the battle. A *Los Angeles Times* article added that Banks and Means described the need for medical supplies such as insulin as “critical” and estimated that they had enough fuel to heat the village for 48 hours and that meals had been cut down to one a day for the occupants (“Wounded Knee Talks Interrupted By Blizzard,” Meagher, 1973, p. A6).

The New York Times reported that some of the AIM followers had begun to “grumble” about the worsening conditions. Some were apparently losing their dedication, and at least three of the occupants had hiked out through the storm to surrender to officials. The demonstration appeared to be a losing cause, according to the article (“U.S. Relaxes Blockade at Wounded Knee,” Kovach, 1973, p. A30).

On March 14, 13 indictments against 31 people involved in the Wounded Knee occupation were returned from the grand Jury convening in Rapid City, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. The names of the indicted individuals would not be released until arrest warrants had been served, according to United States Attorney William Clayton (“Indict 31 at Wounded Knee,” 1975, p. A9). Charges included larceny, burglary, conspiracy, and civil disorder, though none of the indictments had been for kidnapping, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Alleged hostages had been called before the grand jury to testify (“Indians, U.S. Resume Wounded Knee Talks,” Meagher, 1973, p. B7).

Blockades had been lifted to allow press to enter the village, though the storm made it impossible for any to enter. The Justice Department announced that observers from the National Council of Churches would be allowed to take food, fuel, and medical supplies into the village. A March 15 editorial in *The New York Times* criticized the government for their initial decision to cut off essential supplies to the Indians. It read:

“No complexity, however, could justify a turn toward violent repression by the government, as seemed to have been implied by the comment of the chief U.S. marshal on the scene, hinted at either forcible removal or starving out the militants” (“Out at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A42).

While the article called AIM’s demands, “unreasonable,” it suggested that authorities surrounding the village allow food in, but no other amenities. Eventually, the

article suggested, the Indians would grow tired of their “house arrest,” and continue to negotiate (“Out at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A42).

A letter to the editor from James Draper, Georgia Council on Human Relations, published on March 16 in *The New York Times*, criticized America for ignoring historical injustices, and stated that Hitler was an “amateur” compared to the genocide demonstrated by the early U.S. government. It drew similarities between the attitudes of editors in 1965 describing black Civil Rights protest in Mississippi and the Indians of 1973 (“Indians and White America,” Draper, 1973, p. A40).

Criticism of government policy in negotiating with the Indians continued from AIM leaders. *The New York Times* reported that Dennis Banks had questioned the government’s commitment to negotiations after they had called off peace talks because of weather conditions (“U.S. Relaxes at Wounded Knee,” Kovach, 1973, p. A30). Banks said, “I’ve been to football games in worse weather than this,” according to the *Los Angeles Times* (“Wounded Knee Talks Interrupted by Blizzard,” Meagher, 1973, p. A6). The article reported that about 10 inches of snow fell and that the wind chill factor was minus 15 degrees that day. Winds of 60 miles per hour also blew throughout the area. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Vernon Bellecourt addressed an audience at a UCLA fund-raising function, where he said that if reservation conditions weren’t improved, as AIM had requested, the group would show up at the country’s bicentennial celebration “uninvited,” and “blow the candles out.” An AIM lawyer also told reporters that if officials had agreed to hold proceedings within Wounded Knee as AIM leaders had requested, the situation would have been resolved. He called the government negotiators

he had dealt with “arrogant” and “stupid” (“Wounded Knee Talks Interrupted by Blizzard,” Meagher, 1973, p. A6).

Reports from *Akwesasne Notes* about federal forces at Wounded Knee were also different those of other newspapers. For example, one article reported that some of the shots that officials had said were initiated by the Indians had actually resulted when officials attempted to move in on the camp. The article contended that fire had broken out on March 2 because a personnel carrier had ventured “close” to the church, where Indians had set up a command post, and the occupiers began firing in attempts to drive it away. It said that television crews that had snuck into the village had caught footage of the tanks within a few hundred yards of the church and other Indian fortifications more than a few times. The article reported that U.S. tanks also tried to sneak in through demilitarized zones, violating agreements that they had made with Indians to leave the areas neutral. Indians said the evidence was in the “tell-tale” tracks that had been left behind by the vehicles. No one was injured in most of these cases because, the article said, the tanks seemed to return fire with “minimal effort” (“It’s Not Very Promising, U.S. Officials Say,” 1973, p. 17). This statement was similar to that made by Robert Enstad in his March 25 *Chicago Tribune* article that suggests neither side was actually trying to hit each other (“Theatrics Overwhelm,” Enstad, 1973, p. B14).

“It looked too much like Vietnam for many reporters to withhold that comparison,” the article reported. It described government flares that would light up the night skies and cause grass fires, air force jets buzzing overhead as well as planes taking aerial photos for strategic planning, tanks surrounding the perimeter, and M-16s. The article suggested, as

many of the larger, general public newspapers had, that the residents that had stayed were more frightened of federal authorities than they were of AIM (“Violence Was Long Overdue,” 1973, p. 18).

Government Seeks to Negotiate as Press Provide Value Judgments on Indians

A March 16 *New York Times* article reported that Justice Department representative Harington Wood was seeking a “neutral” ground for continued negotiations between officials and AIM. AIM had previously suggested the United Nations, but had been denied (“U.S. Aide Leaves Wounded Knee,” Kovach, 1973, p. A20).

Several articles published on March 16 provided background about AIM and the Pine Ridge reservation. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* described poor conditions on the reservation, including significant unemployment and school dropout rates. One veteran of the BIA told Times staff writer, Robert Rosenblatt, that those rare, ambitious individuals who tried to make a difference on the reservation soon learned that it was useless to try to deal with the political system. As a result, tribal government became “ingrown, stagnant, and ridden with nepotism and jealousy.” The article reported that while many of the Oglalas agreed with AIM’s grievances of the government’s treatment of Native Americans, they disagreed with their radical methods of protest. The article added depth to the problems facing the Sioux Indians and helped to explain why such extreme dissidence was evident in some of the Indians (“Home of the Sioux,” Meagher, 1973, p. A1).

A March 18 article in the *Chicago Tribune*, titled “Pine Ridge Indian Life: poverty, alcohol” by Robert Enstad described the shoddy conditions that reservation Indians were subjected to. He reported that the unemployment rate was 54 percent and that 85 percent of the police problems on the reservation were related to alcohol. He explained that many of the Indians that left the reservation and made it to vocational school also had difficulty finding employment and later returned to the reservation. While Enstad’s article seemed less sympathetic than that of the *Los Angeles Times*, his article provided background to audiences about the challenges that Native Americans continually faced (“Pine Ridge Indian Life,” Enstad, 1973, p. A18).

Other coverage that day provided further background, including profiles on AIM leaders themselves. The *Argus-Leader* reported that four of AIM’s main leaders had served prison terms, including Banks, Means, and brothers Clive and Vernon Bellecourt. It also reported that Means was the only Oglala Sioux of the four leaders. The article described all of the crimes for which the four had been charged. Like similar coverage, the *Argus-Leader* seemed to weaken the credibility of AIM leaders, framing them as petty criminals (“AIM Overrun With Criminals,” 1973, p. A1).

Other articles portrayed AIM as media-hungry, and reported that the group had performed outlandish demonstrations in order to gain media attention. Wilson complained to reporters that his side had not been represented in the news during the take-over. Dennis Banks said, “We counted on the press getting in here to get national opinion on our side,” according to the *Argus-Leader*. The article also reported that AIM information officer, Aaron DeSersa had called television networks and news services as

the group arrived at Wounded Knee. He told them to send reporters and photographers to the area and later called to tell them that AIM had taken over the village. Throughout the occupation, DeSersa led reporters including television crews into the village, and he had created press passes that he said would get them into all AIM demonstrations that year, according to the *Argus-Leader* ("Wounded Knee Takeover Accomplished by Total Surprise," 1973, p. A1).

March 18 coverage in the *Argus-Leader* began to reflect a more sympathetic view toward Wilson and a more negative contention toward AIM. An article in the newspaper called Wilson the "Man in the Middle," and held that "He's been subjected to constant verbal abuse by the leaders of the Indians occupying the hamlet and ignored by federal officials who have come from Washington to settle the dispute." Wilson also complained that he was often held back in his position by the BIA bureaucracy, but that he had a good relationship with the Bureau ("Oglala Leader Wilson: Man in Middle," 1973, p. D28). Robert Enstad's March 18 *Chicago Tribune* article described Wilson's relationship with the BIA in a different way. He reported that the tribal council and Dick "are sort of the city council and mayor of the reservation, but in actuality, seem to be about as powerful as a high school student council. The real power and purse strings of the reservation flow from the Bureau of Indian Affairs" ("Pine Ridge Indian Life: Poverty, Alcohol," 1973, p. 1:6).

Argus-Leader coverage of AIM became more negative as the occupation continued. Interior secretary Morton issued a statement calling AIM leaders "renegades." He called AIM's requests "intolerable," and added that AIM had chosen publicity-

generating confrontations rather than efforts at serious, peaceable negotiations. Other Interior Department representatives, including Interior secretary John Whitaker, continued to claim that they were unable to determine what AIM wanted, despite a list of specific demands that was submitted to them. Banks responded to Morton's statement with his own. He said that Morton was "trying to justify his office's attempt to cover the Bureau of Indian Affairs in its corrupt practices and misuses of federal funds," according to the *Argus-Leader*. In addition to Wilson's impeachment, AIM was now also seeking the dismissal of superintendents Wyman Baddy and Stanley Lyman ("Banks Answers 'Renegades' Accusation," 1973, p. A1).

Negotiations Continue/Government and Religious Agencies Clash

Regarding negotiations with the Justice Department, Rev. John Adams, a Washington minister, told reporters that negotiations were looking very good. AIM attorney Ramon Roubideaux concurred that progress was being made, which countered his original comment that talks with Wood had solved nothing, according to the *Argus-Leader*. On March 17, the newspaper reported that Wood's meeting with high-level officials was a positive sign ("Hopes Rise," 1973, p. A1).

A civil suit was filed against AIM, the National Council of Churches, and the attorney general by the BIA for allowing the Wounded Knee conflict to continue. BIA attorney, William Quigley brought the \$3.2 million suit against the defendants, claiming property damage by the group and the failure of the government to stop the group from continuing their protest. In addition, Quigley charged the National Council of Churches

with providing support, money, and property to the group. According to a March 17 article in *The New York Times*, federal officials had made it a point of saying that they would now make more efforts to include tribal leadership in their decisions (“Churchmen Told By Indians To Go,” Kifner, 1973, p. A14). Elected BIA leader Stanley Lyman (1973) contended that the government had ignored tribal leadership for far too long. He wrote that Federal officials had “completely ignored the elected leadership of the tribe all of the way through this thing,” adding, “Actually, they have been paying more attention to AIM than they have to the elected Oglala leadership” (p. 10).

An initiative by tribal leaders to eject representatives of the National Council of Churches reportedly went into effect on March 17. Tribal police began serving the ordinance to the clergymen, who were staying in an Episcopal church on the reservation. The Justice Department had escorted the church representatives with supplies for AIM to Wounded Knee earlier that day. Wilson threatened to arrest John Adams, of the National Council of Churches and a chief negotiator, though the Department of Interior had advised him not to do so (“Churchmen Told By Indians To Go,” Kifner, 1973, p. A14).

On March 17, *The New York Times* reported that the Nixon Administration issued a statement placing some of the blame for the uprising on the Democratic-controlled Congress. Spokesman John Whitaker said that the president had submitted seven bills more than two years prior to grant registered Native Americans with more power to govern their tribes, though only half of the Indians in the United States belong to Federally recognized tribes. When asked about the statement, Representative James Haley, who had been chairman of the committee that had reviewed Nixon’s legislation,

said, "Department of Interior officials fooled around and waited until the last minute before submitting the bills." He explained that with little time left in Congress' session, he warned Morton that he should prioritize the legislation. Only the top two bills passed and "the administration didn't lobby hard for the bills," said Haley. He also explained that instead of prosecuting the parties involved in the BIA building take-over, that the administration "set a precedent" by paying the "Trail of Broken Treaties" group, or AIM, \$66,500 to leave. They had also terminated several officials employed by the BIA at that time to smooth over the conflict. Haley said that new legislative proposals had been submitted to Congress that day, and would provide for the following:

- "Replacement of the position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs with that of an Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs whose sole responsibility would be that of advocate for Indians."
- "Creation of a trust council authority, which would be given the authority now vested in the Department of Justice to protect and preserve Indian land, water and mineral rights."
- "Authorization for Indian tribes, bands, groups, or communities to control and operate services of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare."
- "An increase in the government's revolving loan fund for economic development of the tribes from \$25-million to \$75-million and total Federal guarantees of private loans for such purposes to \$200-million."
- "Channeling of funds for Indian schools to tribes instead of school districts, which might include non-Indian schools ("Interior Official Lays Indians' Violence," 1973, p. A14).

The New York Times contended that AIM officials had threatened to call a press conference to disclose the amount of money actually provided to them through Federal programs if officials attacked the group by force. The story contended that officials had not infiltrated the village because they didn't want the public to know of recent funding to the group, including \$113,000 from the Office of Economy adding to the more than

\$400,000 total provided to the group since it began in 1968. The article also reported that the group only had only 258 members and that the Oglala Sioux had asked the government to eject the group from the reservation on numerous occasions (“U.S., Indians Reach No Accord in Negotiations, Meagher, 1973, p. A4). The *Argus-Leader* contended that the Wounded Knee occupation was just another tactic that the group was trying to use to collect money from the government. While previous *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* coverage had been sympathetic toward AIM, this new information framed the group as money-hungry con artists and criminals (“AIM Overrun With Criminals,” 1973, p. A1).

Tension Continues, But Resolution Discussed

On March 18, *The New York Times* reported that Harrington Wood had delivered a proposal to Banks that neither of the parties would comment on until the Indians had reviewed and replied to it. He told Banks that the proposal had been his best effort and that he would return any time AIM leaders wanted to talk to him (“Outsiders Headed for Wounded Knee,” Kovach, 1973, p. A42).

Marvin Franklin, the highest-ranking officer of the Bureau of Indian affairs, traveled to the reservation to meet with Dick Wilson. Despite requests from AIM leaders that the official come to negotiate with the group, this was Franklin’s first visit to the reservation, and he told reporters that he had come specifically to meet with Wilson (“Outsiders Headed for Wounded Knee,” Kovach, 1973, p. A42).

The government began stepping up security measures around the village. Efforts to block AIM supporters from coming to the area were increased and resulted in the ejection of nearly 100 people from surrounding areas. Three white people were arrested for obstructing justice ("Outsiders Headed for Wounded Knee," Kovach, 1973, p. A42).

Gunfire between officials broke out again on March 18. Officials reported that occupiers in the village had initiated the gunfire, which was directed at one of the government posts. It was reported that an AIM supporter had been injured when he was grazed by a bullet in the abdomen. An AIM leader reported that the injured party was a Hispanic man that had been working as a medic in the village. Banks had received a peace proposal from the Department of Justice earlier that day, though the exchange of fire suggested that an agreement had not yet been reached. A *Los Angeles Times* article reported that while AIM had not "formally" rejected the proposal, there were indications that the group would not agree to it ("U.S., Indians Reach No Accord," Meagher, 1973, p. A4).

The *Chicago Tribune* ran an AP article that reported that negotiations were still going well. Wood said, "I think as long as we're talking together, we're making progress." Part of the government proposal was that two high-ranking Interior officials would come to the village and negotiate with AIM. At the same time, Indians would disarm, and those with warrants issued would go peaceably with officials. The Justice Department would not recommend high bail, leaving the decision to the grand jury ("Indians, U.S. Hold Peace Powwow," 1973, p. A18).

Proposal Rejected

A *New York Times* article reported that AIM security leaders again burned a copy of the government proposal in front of a cheering crowd, despite peace talks scheduled with officials. Means and AIM security leader, Stanley Holder, condemned the proposal, and contended that it amounted to nothing more than surrender. Means said that the group would announce their reply, or their “ultimatum” the following day (“Indians Set Fire to U.S. Proposal,” Kovach, p. A15).

A March 20 article in the *Washington Post* reported that AIM leaders had announced their “final ultimatum.” They would only deal with President Nixon or an appointed Sioux representative to negotiate a settlement. In addition, Nixon was to appoint a supervisor to investigate tribal programs. AIM rejected the plan set forth by Wood, contending that the government negotiations were based on the 1868 treaty that had originally forced the Indians onto the reservation. There was no sign that peace talks would resume after the Indians met with officials to discuss the most recent proposal (“Indians Ask Nixon to Enter Talks,” Hughes, 1973, p. A9).

Coverage Claims AIM is Damaging Indian Credibility, But Support for Group Continues

The Washington Post reported that another Pine Ridge group calling itself “United Sioux for Better government” was undermining AIM by using their own non-violent method of attempting to remove Wilson and the tribal constitution. The group collected 1,425 Oglala Sioux signatures, including two from tribal council members to advocate tribal government reform (“Indians Ask Nixon to Enter Talks,” Hughes, 1973,

p. A9). The votes comprised more than 30 percent of the voting population, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. The signatures had to be posted for 30 days before a re-election could be held ("Peaceful Sioux Echo Rebel Call," Meagher, 1973, p. A4). The *Argus-Leader* added that the petition didn't specifically name Wilson, though it called for a re-election of tribal officials ("Pine Ridge Petition Seeks Vote," 1973, p. A1).

Negative coverage continued for AIM leaders in a March 20 *Argus-Leader* article. It contended that AIM's protest was damaging to Pine Ridge, as it had affected tribal action on several million dollars and was costing the reservation \$15,000 per day in delayed construction costs for 25 houses. The article also reported that the American Red Cross and BIA had been caring for 244 refugees, many of whom had been displaced from the village. In addition, school had been dismissed on the reservation for several days due to the incident ("AIM Hurting Pine Ridge Reservation, 1973, p. A1). The next day, an *Argus-Leader* article included an interview with former Sioux tribal president, Robert Burnette. He told reporters that if the incident ended in violence, other incidences like it would ensue. He said that a confrontation would encourage Indians in a nearby encampment as well as 4,000-5,000 other Pine Ridge residents to come to support AIM. In addition, Banks told reporters that 500 armed Indians were going to enter the village from the Rosebud reservation for a religious celebration. He said that the Indians had a right to enter in accordance with the 1868 treaty, and that they would come with hunting equipment and other supplies. A March 26 *New York Times* article reported that outside support for the group continued as approximately 4,000 people attended a religious mass

in New York to pray for the Indians at Wounded Knee ("Burnette Predicts More Sieges," 1973, p. A1).

Supporters also continued efforts to smuggle supplies to the group. Sixteen Indians were arrested for violating antiriot laws when they attempted to carry supplies from Las Vegas to Wounded Knee. According to the *Argus-Leader*, ten of the 16 were released from prison after actor/entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. posted bail for them. Another group of five Indians from Buffalo, New York were arrested en route to join the protesters. However, they were released because officials decided that they had committed no crime, and had only been arrested "in good faith" ("Spokesman Says Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1). The March 24 *The Los Angeles Times* reported that African American civil rights activist Angela Davis had also traveled to Wounded Knee, but was barred from entering by authorities. The article said that the "black militant" and Reverend John Adams had been escorted out by BIA police. The Justice Department claimed that they had not been responsible for the eviction of the two, and that the BIA police had the right to act independently from the other authorities ("Angela Davis Stopped," 1973, p. A6).

Indictments Become Bargaining Chips as Wilson's Followers Act Out

A Rapid City Grand Jury indicted 54 people for their involvement in the Wounded Knee Occupation, according to the March 24 *Argus-Leader* ("Wounded Knee Indictments," 1973, p. A1). An article in the March 29 issue of the publication reported that Attorney General Richard Kleindienst told reporters that some of the indictments

would be used by the Justice Department to bargain with AIM ("Kleindienst Says Indictments Being Used," 1973, p. A1).

Gunfire between Indians and officials began again on March 24. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that "sources" had said the gunfire was a tactic used to distract authorities as supporters snuck in through the other side of the camp ("Angela Davis Stopped," 1973, p. A6). On March 26, the Indians were granted a court order to have six carloads of food and supplies brought to them ("Judge Lets Supplies Enter," 1973, p. A4). However, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on March 27 that BIA roadblocks were stopping AIM lawyers from bringing supplies into Wounded Knee. When AIM lawyer John Keller, showed Indians the court order allowing him to enter with the supplies, he was told by BIA officials that the order held no power in Wounded Knee. The food in Keller's car was confiscated, and he was told that it would be distributed to other Indians in Pine Ridge. Wilson had also told press at roadblocks to get out of the area unless they wanted to get shot. He announced that the people manning the roadblocks were concerned citizens that he had put in place because government officials had "turned their back" on him. Lyman (1991) wrote that Wilson had recruited about 50 "half-blood" volunteers for the roadblocks in defiance of the federal court order, though officials tended to overlook Wilson's insolence because there was unrest over the fact that he had been given such little authority in dealing with the Wounded Knee situation. Wilson installed the roadblock after the burned body of a tribal council member had been found in a car. Authorities would not reveal the identity of the dead man, though Lyman (1991) indicated that the man was Leo Wilcox, a tribal council member. The man's death was a

threat to Wilson because his absence meant that the group had no council (“U.S. Marshal Shot,” 1973, p. A1).

In addition to creating roadblocks, *The New York Times* reported that Wilson’s men had shot out the last remaining phone line to Wounded Knee. Banks told reporters that the Indians would have to resort to violence if food was not allowed in. Wilson and his followers again appeared as bullies in the article (“U.S. Marshal Shot at Wounded Knee, Waldon, 1973, p. A31).

Akwesasne Notes criticized authorities for their lack of discipline over the vigilantes who had decided to assist tribal forces. While it reports that AIM supporters who came to the area were searched and relieved of their weapons, the vigilantes were allowed to roam around freely with their arms. The article reported that one white rancher said he was there “to hunt rabbits.” Another tribal government supporter boasted, “I’ve got three guns right out there in that convertible” (“Violence Was Long Overdue,” 1973, p. 18).

The Press Criticizes AIM But is Still Hungry For Action When Agent is Shot

The press began to question AIM’s motives in their coverage at the end of March. Reports included accusations that the Indians were staging many of the events for their sake, and articles about Wounded Knee were less frequently published and gained less prominent placement. A March 25 article in the *Chicago Tribune* by Robert Enstad, titled, “Theatrics Overwhelm the Uprising,” asked “Why all the fuss by the media?” He said that the press was growing weary of the “non-events” that he claimed the Indians

were performing merely for the sake of gaining attention. In addition, he said that officials had blamed the press for encouraging the Indians to continue in their theatrical behavior, and thus delayed resolution of the situation ("Theatrics Overwhelm," Enstad, 1973, p. B14). Michael Sneed-Long, a reporter who had evaded police blockades to get into the village also said in an April 16 article published in the *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, that he had expected the kind of honor from the Indians that had been seen in their ancestors, without the "cheap theatrical tricks." Sneed-Long said, "I guess I was hoping that somehow, this small militant group would start *being* Indians" ("Looking For Indians," Sneed-Long, 1973, p. I48).

The media seemed interested in the Wounded Knee story again on March 27 when it was announced that a federal agent had been shot. According to the March 27 *Los Angeles Times*, US Marshal Lloyd Grimm was shot in the abdomen at a roadblock when an exchange of fire between authorities and AIM began. US Marshal Wayne Colburn told reporters that the Indians had started shooting and that officials had returned fire for about four minutes ("US Marshal Shot," 1973, p. A1). It was reported that this was the heaviest exchange of fire since the occupation had begun. *The New York Times* reported that Grimm's condition was critical and that he was paralyzed from the waist down ("Firing Stepped Up," Waldon, 1973, p. A4).

Regardless of the breaking news, *The New York Times* reported that television crews from CBS and NBC had left the camp for the first time since the siege began a month earlier. One cameraman said that it had become "pretty tense" in the village ("U.S. Marshal Shot," Waldron, 1973, p. A31).

Banks and Means Disappear

March 28 also brought breaking news to the media. An AIM follower told reporters that Dennis Banks and Russell Means had escaped Wounded Knee under the cover of darkness and heavy gunfire in which Marshal Grimm had been shot. A light airplane also reportedly flew into the town to deliver weapons and ammunition. A government helicopter attempted to follow the plane when it took off again, but lost it, according to *The New York Times* ("Firing Stepped Up," Waldron, 1973, p. A4).

Wilson told reporters that he expected the occupation would collapse within two days without the escaped leaders, according to the *Chicago Tribune* ("Indians Said to Bar Surrender," 1973, p. A93). The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the remaining occupants had split into two factions after the leaders left. According to the article, one of the groups represented AIM and that the other was a civil rights group that sought to take over negotiations. DeSersa, who had become the head of AIM in the village, said that the negotiations would be left to the other group. Attorney Ramon Roubideaux told reporters that AIM would no longer be involved in the negotiations. He said, "We're going to sit down and get these things ironed out. We're going to get it settled on the issues. This could have been terminated earlier if not for the shenanigans of AIM, but AIM is out of it

now.” The demands of the new group in power were reasonable, according to Kent Frizzell, assistant U.S. attorney general. They were as follows:

- “A civil rights investigation”
- “A complete audit of the books of the Oglala Sioux tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of Economic Opportunity.”
- “A new referendum on an agreement to stand by it” (“Indian Militants Apparently Split,” 1973, p. A5).

On March 29, *The New York Times* reported that 100 of the Indian occupiers at Wounded Knee had offered to surrender, but were being held at gunpoint by another group of the Indians. The article reported that the Indians who wished to surrender were led by Pedro Bissonet, head of a Sioux Civil Rights group and by medicine man Leonard Crow Dog. It was reported that Banks and Means had snuck past officials back into the village and were leading the group that refused to let the other faction surrender. The group’s attempt to escape had apparently resulted in a standoff. It was also reported that a government informant inside the village had been providing updates to authorities, and that the Indians now had machine guns and land mines (“Indians Said to Block Surrender,” Waldron, 1973, p. A1).

Senator Abourezk met with Indian and government representatives in Rapid City for negotiations, according to the March 29 *Los Angeles Times*. After the meeting, he said that he was no longer optimistic about a resolution and that the situation was much more “critical” than he had known. Abourezk contended that he would pursue further attempts to negotiate. One of the biggest problems was agreeing where future meetings would take place (“U.S.-Indian Talks Yield No Results,” 1973, p. A9).

The Los Angeles Times also reported that Roubideaux had told Abourezk that no confrontation had ever occurred between different factions of the group. This was in great opposition to his earlier statements. ("U.S.-Indian Talks Yield No Results," 1973, p. A9).

On March 31, *The New York Times* reported some of the 54 names of those who had been indicted by the grand jury along with some of their charges. They included the top four leaders of AIM: Dennis Banks, Russell Means, Carter Camp, Clyde Bellecourt, and Pedro Bissonette ("U.S. Bars All Food Shipments to Wounded Knee," Waldron, 1973, p. A70).

Medical Supplies Replenished as Negotiations Continue

Assistant attorney general Kent Frizzell also announced that food supplies would no longer be allowed into Wounded Knee, but medical supplies would be allowed in, according to *The New York Times*. Shortly after he made this statement, a plane flew over the village, and dropped a parachute. Though officials traced the plane back to its origin, the pilot said he had flown over the area, but denied that he had dropped anything ("U.S. Bars All Food Shipments to Wounded Knee," Waldron, 1973, p. A70).

Sitting cross-legged on a buffalo rug while being blessed by Indian prayers, Frizzell and other officials began their negotiations again with AIM leaders and lawyers. No tribal representatives attended the negotiations as Richard Wilson had denounced the meetings, according to an April 1 *Argus-Leader* ("Officials Refuse Food Request," 1973, p. A1). The April 1 *Los Angeles Times* reported that Frizzell had seemed hopeful after

the meeting, which lasted more than two hours and took place in a tepee located in a neutral zone. They agreed to uphold the cease-fire and to continue negotiations. Occupiers asked for food privileges, but Frizzell denied the Indians any kind of sustenance aside from baby food for the children. He offered to set up a government run soup-kitchen in a neutral zone, but said that anyone entering would be searched for weapons and arrested if there was a warrant issued for them ("Indians, U.S. Aides Agree to Keep Peace," 1973, p. A1). AIM leaders said the offer was degrading and rejected it.

Further division in the group was apparent as Aaron DeSersa announced that he had been suspended from his position as communications officer by other AIM leaders. He told reporters that he wanted nothing more to do with the group and that he was quitting the post ("Officials Refuse Food Request," 1973, p. A1).

On April 2, it was reported that negotiations had continued successfully. Frizzell had come to agreement with AIM on more than half of the ten demands being made by the group. Ramon Roubideaux told reporters that the Indians would come out peaceably and face legal charges when the ten items had been addressed, according to the *Argus-Leader* ("Agreement That Could End Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1). He said that he didn't consider the remaining items to be "too serious," and that he foresaw a peaceful resolution. The two items that seemed to be the main stumbling blocks, according to *The New York Times*, were Wilson's recent suspension from office and the Indians' desire to exit the town "with dignity," without having their weapons taken from them. Frizzell said that he thought the negotiations had been more successful as a result of not having the press present. His goal was to quickly find a resolution to the issue as the monetary

costs of Wounded Knee continually grew. One official estimated that Wounded Knee was costing the government approximately \$65,000 per day ("Talks Are Begun on Wounded Knee," Waldron, p. A78).

After four days of negotiations, Frizzell told reporters that he and AIM leaders had agreed on nine out of ten of the points. In addition, he said that Richard Wilson had also agreed to the ten-point proposal. He agreed to lift tribal roadblocks and honor the agreement if all ten points could be agreed on, according to the *Argus-Leader* ("Settlement Appears Imminent," De Vine, p. A1).

On April 6, it was reported that AIM leader Russell Means and assistant U.S. attorney general signed a six-point pact to end the occupation of Wounded Knee. According to an A.P. article in the *Los Angeles Times*, the pact contained the following agreements:

- "Russell Means, leader of the occupying Indians will go to Washington Saturday to meet with White House representatives."
- "Once that meeting starts, the militants will leave Wounded Knee, submit to arrest and be taken to Rapid City for arraignment."
- "There will be a federal investigation of Indian affairs throughout the Pine Ridge reservation and an audit of tribal funds."
- "The Department of Justice will consider and where appropriate, bring civil suits to protect the legal rights of Oglala Sioux Indians against unlawful abuses by tribal government or federal authority."
- "A presidential treaty commission will be set up to reexamine the 1868 government treaty with the Sioux Nation."
- "Indian leaders and White House representatives will meet next month in Washington to consider Indian affairs" ("Indians, U.S. Sign Pact," 1973, p. A1).

The article reported that after Russell Means signed the agreement, he was taken into custody and flown by helicopter to a Rapid City US District Court where he

appeared on a bail bonds hearing. He was released to a Rapid City businessman on \$25,000 bond. Means told reporters that the occupation was "a minor preliminary victory," and he said that the agreement was "a small victory in the Indian war with the United States over our treaty rights," according to the *Los Angeles Times* ("Indians, U.S. Sign Pact," 1973, pp. A1, A24). AIM contended that part of the agreement included the stipulation that Means would call the reservation when talks at the White House had begun and tell the group to disarm and surrender if he was satisfied with the outcome of the talks. He said, "I'm going to be communicating with those at Wounded Knee and giving them instructions and they won't be coming out until there are complete results," according to an April 6 article in the *Argus-Leader* ("Means Charged on Nine Counts," 1973, p. A1).

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Kent Frizzell said of the situation:

"I don't think any great victory has been won by anyone at Wounded Knee. I think we have all learned something here and now hope we will go on and improve conditions between whites and Indians. I think what we have learned here is that all of us have failed in the past to live up to our agreements. We're going to do a better job in the future to see that these agreements are kept," ("Indians U.S. Sign Pact," 1973, pp. A1, A24).

The treaty was signed by three AIM members, including Means; Pedro Bisonnette, a representative of the Oglala Civil Rights Organization; and Chief Tom Badd, an Oglala chief who practiced traditional ways. It was reported that AIM leader Dennis Banks did not sign the agreement or even sit at the table where it was being signed, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Though Wilson had not signed the agreement, he had BIA roadblocks removed within an hour of the treaty being signed, according to Frizzell ("Indians U.S. Sign Pact," 1973, pp. A1, A24).

Mistrust Delays Resolution

The *Argus-Leader* reported that Means was accompanied by lawyers and two other AIM members on his trip to Washington. They were scheduled to meet with Leonard Garment, special consultant to President Nixon where they would discuss the examination of treaties between the United States and Native Americans. Reports indicated that Means was not yet satisfied that the government would uphold their end of the treaty to his expectations ("Means Charged On Nine Counts," 1973, p. A1). Means said, "The federal government has duped the press and the world again. The conflict at Wounded Knee is not over and will not be over until the federal government shows it is sincere," according an April 7 article in the *Chicago Tribune* ("Indians In Capital," 1973, p. A3). Similarly, the *Argus-Leader* reported that Frizzell was concerned that some of the occupants would not lay down their arms willingly ("Frizzell Fears," 1973, p. A1).

April 8 coverage indicated that both sides had doubts that the treaty would be upheld. Accusations from Means in Washington that the government had been closing in on the occupants in his absence led to an angry rebuttal from Frizzell, who said that he would stand by the treaty "...until Hell freezes over," according to the April 8 *Chicago Tribune* ("U.S., Indians Swap Charges," 1973, p. A40). Means complained about the meeting scheduled with Garment that had been postponed for more than 24 hours. In addition, Frizzell and Means disagreed on the timing of Means' call, which would signal the end of the siege. Means insisted that the call take place after he was satisfied with negotiations with Garment, while Frizzell had believed that the call would come as soon

as negotiations were underway. Means said, “Common sense will tell you it would be asinine for me to do it any other way,” according to the April 8 *New York Times* (“Phone Call to Surrender,” Walsh, 1973, p. A34). Deputy assistant attorney general, Richard Hellstern met with Means to try to discuss his complaints informally, and reported that the Justice Department’s position had remained the same (“Phone Call to Surrender,” Walsh, 1973, p. A34).

An April 9 *Chicago Tribune* article reported that meetings with Garnet had been called off because of an apparent noncompliance with the treaty by Means. It said that the government was waiting for Means to make the call to Wounded Knee before they would allow for the meeting to begin. Frizzell told reporters, “The White House will not meet with Means while guns are pointed at federal officers in Wounded Knee” (“Indians Reject New U.S. Offer,” 1973, p. A1). Means announced an ultimatum to the government on April 10, after negotiations had still failed to begin. He said that if the meeting didn’t start immediately, he would have to return back to South Dakota and tell the occupants at Wounded Knee to continue their hold on the village. Means announced that officials would now have to wait until the meetings were over for the group to disarm. Ralph Erickson made the following statement:

“The position now taken by A.I.M. leadership clearly represents a change in position. There now exists a signed document and that document has been made public. We do not intend to accept unilateral changes or modifications to that document made by the A.I.M. leadership. We intend to stand by the agreement as it was originally made,” according to an April 10 article in *The New York Times* (“No Meeting Scheduled,” 1973, p. A27).

Government representatives became increasingly disgusted with the group. James Haley, a member of the House Indian affairs subcommittee conducting an investigation

of Wounded Knee, called AIM a group of “goons or gutter rats,” according to the *Los Angeles Times* (“Militant Indians Called ‘Goons,’ 1973, p. A14).

Articles in the April 10 *Chicago Tribune* claimed that some of the non-Indians that had joined the group at Wounded Knee were ex-soldiers against war, who were trained in modern war techniques. It said that while Banks and Means were more “bark than bite” when it came to actual violence in their confrontations, others who had joined them to advocate on behalf of their own causes were after blood. As the standoff continued, Means made more threats that the situation might turn to violence (“Wounded Knee Ultimatum Issued,” 1973, p. A1).

On April 10, Russell Means departed Washington and arrived in New York. He said that his talks in Washington had been “abortive” and that he planned to return to Wounded Knee to help secure its boarders, according to an April 11 article in *The Los Angeles Times*. A series of negotiations had occurred in Means’ absence about the way the Indians would lay down arms and leave the village (“Indian Leader Calls Capital Talks Abortive,” 1973, p. A4). However, no plan had been agreed on, and the AIM leader said the government’s proposal was now “unacceptable,” according to an April 13 article in *The New York Times* (“Indian Impasse Returns,” Stevens, 1977, p. A42). In addition, Banks, who hadn’t attended any of the negotiation sessions, told reporters that he did not feel bound by the April 5 treaty signed by other AIM leaders, according to an April 12 article in the *Argus-Leader* (“Government Negotiators Await Decision,” Woster, p. A1). *The New York Times* reported on April 13 that AIM leaders at Wounded Knee refused to deal with officials again until Means and the other AIM supporters returned to

the village. Means told reporters that he would appear in court on April 16, and that he wasn't sure when he would return back Wounded Knee. The article reported that one of the conditions of Means' release on bail was that he not interact with people who bear arms. His presence in Wounded Knee would be a clear violation of his parole agreement ("Indian Impasse Returns," Stevens, 1973, p. A42).

Wounded Knee Residents Grow Impatient

Displaced residents from the village were also becoming increasingly impatient with the stalemate. They blamed the government for allowing the situation to drag on and set up their own roadblock on the main highway from Wounded Knee to Pine Ridge. They allowed no-one but federal officials to pass through. Assistant Attorney General Stanley Pottinger attempted to calm the refugees. He explained that the situation had continued because officials wanted to ensure that "all avenues short of violence..." were explored before resorting to a fight, according to an April 13 article in *The New York Times* ("Indian Impasse Returns," Stevens, 1973, p. A42.) Despite Pottinger's request that the residents dismantle their roadblocks, the group refused to comply and began blocking Community Relations Service (CRS) representatives from entering, according to the April 16 *Argus-Leader*. CRS had been working on negotiations with Indians and authorities and had previously helped to ensure a cease-fire between the sides ("Means, Bellecourt Scheduled," Woster, 1973, p. A1). Justice Department spokesperson, Richard Hellstern told reporters that officials were doing what they could to get the residents to

comply since CRS played a significant role in maintaining safe conditions as negotiations continued (“Attorney For Militant Indians,” Woster, 1973, p. A1).

A spokesperson for the refugee group asked for \$100 per family for each day they had been displaced, according to the *Argus-Leader*. Pottinger said he would relay their requests to the proper officials. Disgruntled residents said that they wanted someone to help them pay for their destroyed property. One man said he had lost several horses when his fence had been knocked over by a government personnel carrier. Angry residents said that if the standoff was not finished in time for Easter, they would get past government roadblocks and “harass” the Indians who had taken their property. They gave AIM until May 3 to surrender before they threatened take action. An April 16 *Argus-Leader* article also suggested that the group was considering court action if the government tried to use helicopters to get past their roadblocks. The article reported that rations in the village were down to one bowl of rice per day per person due to resident, BIA, and government security surrounding the area (“Attorney for Militant Indians,” Woster, 1973, p. A1).

Means and Bellecourt Plead Innocent/AIM Supporter Shot

On April 17, Russell Means and Clyde Bellecourt pleaded innocent to charges against them by a US District Court, and they asked that their trial take place outside of South Dakota because of the “frontier mentality,” there, according to an article in the *Chicago Tribune*. The two were charged with obstructing federal officers, assault, arson, burglary, larceny, and conspiracy with a maximum sentence of eight years and \$96,000 in

fines. They were required to inform the government if they wanted to leave South Dakota, and were ordered not to return to Wounded Knee without permission from the Justice Department. Means and Bellecourt complained that the infringement on their travel was a violation of their rights ("2 Indians Plead," 1973, p. A3). Means told reporters, "If the Federal government ever hopes to resolve the impasse at Wounded Knee, I will have to return," according to *The New York Times* ("2 Indian Leaders," 1973, p. A31).

Gunfire at Wounded Knee ended a three-week cease-fire agreement after supply drops from three light airplanes, according to the *Argus-Leader*. Officials reported that shortly after the planes had flown over, the Indians began to fire on a government helicopter performing a reconnaissance mission. The helicopter was not hit, but the Indians then began to fire at three federal roadblocks, according to officials. They reported that the marshals inside were not allowed to return fire until they had received permission an hour later ("Heavy Gunfire Reported," 1973, p. A1).

One AIM supporter suffered a wound to the head during the exchange of fire and was taken by helicopter to Pine Ridge ("Gunfire Exchanged," 1973, p. A2). An April 18 *New York Times* article featured an interview with Dr. Silverstein, a medic who had accompanied the man with the head wound to a federal roadblock. Silverstein told reporters that the gunfire had erupted only after "unwarranted aggression" by the government had occurred ("Fighting Breaks Out," Stevens, 1973, p. A1). The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the man who left the village was near death. Assistant attorney general Stanley Pottinger announced that the government would no longer

tolerate attacks from the Indians, and would return fire more readily in the future (“Marshals Will Return,” 1973, p. A19).

The Associated Press and the *Washington Post* received an anonymous report that the light planes had dropped packages with about 2,000 pounds of food and that those piloting the planes were part of a group of antiwar activists that supported AIM. The caller said that most of the marshals “appeared to be asleep” during the air drop, and that the dehydrated food parachuted to the Indians could last for up to one month (“Indians, Agents Exchange Fire,” Claiborne, 1973, p. A1). According to *The New York Times*, officials suspected that the planes, which had dropped the loads at about 5:18 am, had also been carrying weapons because. They felt that the gunfire that broke out shortly after the Indians had received new supplies was more than just a coincidence. However, Thomas Oliphant, a reporter for *The Boston Globe* claimed that he had been aboard one of the planes and that none of them were carrying weapons, according to *The New York Times*. Oliphant said, “I watched when the bags were packed, and had I seen so much as a shell I would have walked out” (“Fighting Breaks Out,” 1973, p. A1). Russell Means told reporters that he had been informed that the gunfire exchange had begun when officials fired on the planes dropping the supplies, according to the *Argus-Leader* (“Government Reinforces Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A1). Federal officials contended that they hadn’t begun firing until approximately three hours after the airdrop had occurred, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. The anonymous caller, who claimed to be one of the pilots, reported that the planes had not been fired on (“Marshals Will Return Fire,” 1973, p. A19).

Residents and Local Police Ignore Authorities and Become Increasingly Impatient

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that 14 residents of Wounded Knee who claimed to be AIM supporters had ignored government roadblocks and returned on foot up to their homes. Most of them were women and children ("Marshals Will Return Fire," 1973, p. A19). Another six people en route to Wounded Knee were arrested by tribal police, according to the *Argus-Leader*. Officials had no explanation as to why some of the people entering the village were allowed in, while others were arrested, according to the article ("10 Leave Portland," 1973, p. A1). The *New York Times* reported that three buildings within the village had burned down, including two houses belonging to residents who had threatened to come and "harass" the Indians. The article didn't indicate how the houses had caught fire ("Indian Villagers," Waldon, 1973, p. A36). An April 20 article in the *Argus-Leader* reported that an Interior Department spokesman had said that though he had heard rumors of fire, the federal officials surrounding the village had seen none ("Chief Negotiator Believes Talks," 1973, p. B96).

Officials reported that sporadic gunfire aimed at Wounded Knee had been coming from displaced village residents, according to an April 20 article in *The New York Times* ("Indian Villagers Vow," 1973, p. A34). Pottinger informed residents after they had threatened to take up arms against occupants that they would be in trouble with the law if they used weapons against the Indians ("Indian Villagers Vow," 1973, p. A34).

One resident complained to reporters that there actually were no Indians occupying Wounded Knee, but just radical dissidents of other races ("Indian Villagers Vow," 1973, p. A34). Francis Randall contended that AIM was a communist group with

“Chicanos, Negroes, Russians and Cherokees,” according to an April 21 article in *The New York Times*. He added that the residents would move on the occupants if the government hadn’t come to a settlement by May 4. Wanting to keep Means and Bellecourt out of future negotiations, Randall said that the deadline would be pushed up if officials brought the two back to the reservation for negotiations (“U.S. Recalls Aide,” 1973, p. A11). Wilson said he would back residents in an attack against the occupiers, an April 21 *New York Times* article reported (“U.S. Recalls Aide,” 1973, p. A11).

BIA and reservation police also continued to flex their authority. The *Argus-Leader* reported on April 20 that an AIM attorney had been arrested and detained in a Pine Ridge jail when he attempted to enter the village. Another attorney, who requested to speak with the detained man, was escorted off the reservation and banned by the tribal police from coming back onto the reservation until the Wounded Knee conflict was resolved (“Chief Negotiator Believes,” 1973, p. B96).

Division Among Occupiers Stalls Negotiations

Russell Means continued to complain that the government had violated the April 5 treaty, which he said could now be added to the long list of Native American treaties broken by the Government. Pottinger told reporters that the government had tried to encourage negotiations by granting permission to Means to return to Wounded Knee, but he had declined because he was now on a speaking tour, according to an April 19 article in *The New York Times* (“Roadblock is Run,” Waldron, 1973, p. A35). Indians at a roadblock also told Pottinger that they wouldn’t continue negotiations until their spiritual

advisor, Leonard Crow Dog had returned to the reservation. The Sioux medicine man was apparently on the Rosebud reservation meditating on a peaceful solution to the conflict. Pottinger said that it could be days before Crow Dog would return to Wounded Knee ("Roadblock is Run," Waldron, 1973, p. A35). The *Argus-Leader* reported that Pottinger had seemed optimistic that peace talks would resume in a timely manner, but he was apprehensive about determining which parties represented the majority of the divided group. Camp told officials that AIM leaders within in the village would act as the key negotiators, according to the article ("Chief Negotiator," 1973, p. B96).

The *Argus-Leader* reported on April 21 that after returning from meetings in Washington, a less optimistic Pottinger, announced that further negotiations with the Indians would likely be "fruitless," and that time was running out for the government to solve the issue without force ("Wounded Knee Residents," Woster, 1973, p. A1). Senators McGovern and Abdnor contended that it was unlikely that the situation would end peaceably, and they issued a statement asking the Department of Justice to end the siege "by employing any force necessary," according to an April 22 article in the *Argus-Leader*. The Senators said that the "serious and ridiculous" situation had gone on long enough, and they believed the occupying group had forfeited peace by having no respect for the law ("McGovern, 1973, p. A1).

Men Arrested For Involvement in Airdrop

Bill Zimmerman of Boston was arrested for his alleged involvement in the April 17 airdrop to Wounded Knee, according to the April 10 *Argus-Leader*. Zimmerman, who

was also the national coordinator of the group, Medical Aid to Indochina was charged with conspiracy to violate the federal antiriot statute ("Wounded Knee Residents," Woster, 1973, p. B97). According to an April 22 article in *The New York Times*, a warrant for the arrest of *Boston Globe* reporter Thomas Oliphant had also been issued. Oliphant, who had been aboard one of the planes dropping supplies to the village, was charged with conspiracy to violate antiriot provisions of the 1968 Federal Crime Control Act, according to the article ("Newsman On Flight," 1973, p. A39). Oliphant turned himself in the same day and was released by police, though authorities had yet to determine whether he would have to face charges of conspiracy to incite a riot, according to *The Los Angeles Times* ("Reporter in Airdrop Case," 1973, p. A7). *The New York Times* contended that Oliphant had been on assignment when he took part in the air-drop ("Oglala Leader Told," Waldon, 1973, p. A28). Oliphant had said he was acting only as a reporter when he covered the story and hadn't actually aided the parties who dropped the supplies, according to *The Washington Post*. The Reporters' Committee for Freedom of the Press released the following statement about Oliphant's treatment: "The arrest seriously infringed on the right of the public to learn about newsworthy events and continues the harassment and intimidation which the press is increasingly facing all over the nation," ("Boston Reporter Arraigned," Hodge, 1973, p. A1).

Strange Performance Gains Little Press Attention

On Easter Sunday, the *Argus-Leader* reported that officials had witnessed a very strange "performance" by the Indians near the trading post. During a demonstration that

resembled the crucifixion, occupants kicked and beat a person tied to a cross for nearly six hours, according to an AP article. The victim was dressed in a marshal's uniform and doubled over as if in pain while being beaten. The person was then placed on the cross and wasn't cut down until later that afternoon. Police speculated that the demonstration was performed in the open to try to provoke officials into exposing their positions, though they could not be sure how to interpret the event ("Marshals Spend Easter Watching," De Vine, 1973, p. A1).

Strangely, the *Chicago Tribune* also published a UPI article on April 23 that reported, "Federal marshals ate Easter dinner in their bunkers and there were no reports of any unusual activity inside the village" ("19 Arrested Taking Aid," 1973, p. A15). It seemed unusual for the *Chicago Tribune* not to report a story like "the crucifixion," as *The Tribune* had frequently emphasized the view that AIM was using theatrics to attract press attention. It was also unusual that none of the other publications reviewed covered the story, which appeared to be extremely sensational in nature. It framed the occupiers as either media-hungry actors or violent savages. The lack of coverage indicated that the press no longer viewed the occupants' "performances" as newsworthy.

Activists Across Country Advocate For AIM as Poor Conditions Continue

A 500-person march from the Rosebud Sioux reservation to Wounded Knee was also scheduled for Easter, though later reports indicated that only 70 people took part in the demonstration and were turned away when they arrived at the reservation, according to an April 26 article in the *Los Angeles Times*. Hellstern told reporters that the marchers

would not be allowed into the village, though several people had attempted to get in (“Indian Hurt in Shootout,” 1973, p. A6). On April 23, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that officials had arrested 60 people in a three-day period as they tried to enter the village. Smaller demonstrations were also taking place across the country. Approximately 100 Indians attempted to occupy a nearby high school, but were evacuated when authorities threatened arrest. Six Indians had also attempted to occupy the governor’s mansion in Sacramento, CA, but were arrested (“Tightening of Perimeter,” 1973, p. A2).

Reports that disease was rampant in the village and that the occupants were living in unsanitary conditions came from a nurse who had been inside the village, according to an April 23 article in the *Argus-Leader* (“The Inside of Wounded Knee,” Wilson, 1973, p. A1). Similarly, an article the same day in *The New York Times* described a deteriorating AIM. The article reported that the conflict had pitted “brother against brother and sister against sister” (“Deteriorating Situation,” Waldron, 1973, p. A23).

Means Continues to Advocate, But is Arrested For Violating Parole

Russell Means continued attempts to raise money for the group. He told audiences about the racist mentality that Indians were subjected to in South Dakota. Means indicated that the Indians weren’t afraid to take back part of their land from the government with violence, and warned, “We’re going to militarily take over the western half of South Dakota,” according to an April 25 editorial in the *Argus-Leader*. While Means had been granted permission to travel across the country to advocate for AIM, his speech was going “far beyond” what had been permitted by the court, according to the

article. It suggested that Means' threat should have evoked a serious response from officials and recommended that Means' bond be revoked and that he be taken "out of circulation" ("Means' Threat," 1973, p. A1).

On April 27, the *Argus-Leader* reported that Means had failed to appear for a hearing to revoke his bond. The court charged that Means hadn't filed accurate or timely travel plans. Judge Andrew Bouge had agreed to delay the hearing for another day, but said he would hold the hearing whether or not Means was in attendance. The article reported that Means had told an AIM worker that he was busy meeting with actor Marlon Brando in Los Angeles. He didn't plan to make the hearing the next day and expected to be arrested for his failure to appear ("Means Fails to Appear," 1973, p. A1). Means was arrested after a speech about AIM in Los Angeles, and his \$25,000 bond was revoked ("Leader of Militant Indians," 1973, p. A3).

Reorganization of the BIA Begins

Government officials announced that they would begin efforts toward reorganizing the Bureau of Indian Affairs, despite the unresolved situation at Wounded Knee. A *New York Times* article indicated that older, more conservative Indians were more likely to approve of the agreement, while younger, more radical Indians were less likely to consider it sufficient. The plan would allow Indians more influence on tribal policy decisions with an advisory position, rather than establishing a more independent role, as AIM had been advocating for. Another objection from many more radical Indians was that the policy would not extend programs to non-reservation Indians.

Among the revisions, many of the BIA responsibilities would be shifted from the main headquarters to field offices. Local tribal leaders would appoint an advisory council to help field offices determine budgets. In addition, they would appoint a national advisory council that would advocate to central BIA headquarters. Councils would not be allowed the authority to veto. Marvin Franklin would be nominated as bureau commissioner. Many of the more radical Indians saw Franklin as part of “the establishment” and worried that conservative tribal governments would not chose radical Indians to be advisory council representatives. The goal of the decentralization effort was to shift power from the BIA to tribal governments (“Oglala Leader Told,” Waldron, p. 3:28).

More Conflict With Displaced Residents Erupts and Wilson Steps In

On April 24, an *Argus-Leader* article reported that eight displaced residents had been arrested at a roadblock after they had become belligerent and prevented CRS personnel from entering the Village. Though their road blocks had previously been allowed because authorities sympathized with the group’s position, it was reported that their activities had gotten out of hand and that their threats to oust the Indians by force was not helping to resolve the issue (“Oglala President Says Tribe,” 1973, p. A1).

Dick Wilson told reporters that he planned to set up a roadblock with tribal police where the residents’ post had been established earlier, according to the *Argus-Leader*. He told reporters, “I’m fed up with the Department of Injustice.” Deputy assistant U.S. attorney general, Richard Hellstern told reporters that Wilson wouldn’t be allowed to set up the blocks as the FBI would be taking over all posts. According to the article, Wilson

told reporters that he was aware that tribal police could be arrested if there were attempts to install the roadblock ("Oglala President Says Tribe," 1973, p. A1).

Despite earlier threats of arrest, The April 25 *New York Times* reported that approximately 100 Indians following Dick Wilson's orders set up a road-block in place of the one that had been torn down. However, instead of arresting the group, the FBI helped to man the post, according to the article. Hellstern argued that the block belonged to the FBI, though the article reported that "a source" had said that the Department of Interior and the FBI had agreed to let the Indians maintain the block, but hadn't informed Hellstern. The article reported that Wilson had threatened to use force if he received any opposition from authorities in attempting to establish it ("Indians Set Up New Roadblock," Waldron, 1973, p. F85).

Wilson made television and radio appearances to ask that all available Oglala Sioux come to help support his cause, according to *The New York Times*. Wilson told reporters that once his supporters had arrived on site, the FBI had told him that they would be allowed to set up the block. He said that they were also informed that CRS employees, who he believed sympathized with the AIM cause, would no longer be allowed into the village. In addition, he said that the displaced residents that had been arrested would be released without charges. Hellstern told reporters that the information had been false. He said that if Wilson's followers had been told that they could set up the blocks, it had been due to a "break down in communications" ("Oglala President Says Tribe," 1973, p. A1).

The *Argus-Leader* reported a different AP story on April 26, which contended that Hellstern had met with Wilson and other officials and had agreed to keep up tribal blocks and to not permit CRS employees to enter Wounded Knee. The article reported that Hellstern, Frizzell, and Colburn had been involved in a heated confrontation at the roadblock with Wilson's followers and that guns had been pulled on them. "They were, to say the least, hot under the collar," Hellstern said, according to the article. Wilson said as he held his fingers close together, "We came this far from shooting Frizzell and Colburn" ("Officials Attempting to Iron Out," De Vine, 1973, p. A1). An April 26 article in *The New York Times* reported Wilson's story that both sides had raised arms at each other ("Wounded Knee Shooting," Waldron, 1973, p. L16).

Hellstern announced on April 27 that an agreement had been reached with Wilson and other tribal leaders that the forces would work more closely together in the future, according to the *Argus-Leader*. US marshals would help to train tribal police and would allow them to be more active in the decision-making process at Wounded Knee. In addition, tribal leaders and government officials would hold daily briefings on the events that had taken place, where the most up-to-date information would be exchanged. Hellstern said that CRS employees would be allowed back into the village and that Wilson had agreed to dismantle roadblocks. However, they agreed that two tribal police officers would be also be allowed to observe and man federal-run posts ("Chief Government Negotiator," De Vine, 1973, p. A1).

Wounded AIM Supporter Dies

An April 25, in the *Argus-Leader* reported that the first death related to the occupation had occurred. Frank Clearwater, the 47-year old Indian who had suffered a bullet wound to the head a week earlier, had died in Rapid City where he was flown by helicopter for treatment. His wife, who was three months pregnant and had also been in Wounded Knee, requested that his body be buried in the village. She reported that he had been struck by a police bullet that had come through a wall. She said that the two had snuck past roadblocks into the village two days before, and that they were not members of AIM, though they supported the group's causes ("First Wounded Knee Fatality," 1973, p. A1). Vernon Bellecourt announced that Clearwater's death was "...a very meaningful contribution to the Indian struggle in this country," according to an April 27 article in the *Argus-Leader* ("Bellecourt Says Clearwater," 1973, p. A1).

Hellstern later told reporters that a fingerprint check had revealed that Clearwater also went by the identity of Frank Clear, a white man, and that the FBI didn't believe that he was actually part Apache, as he had claimed to be ("Officials Attempting to Iron Out," De Vine, 1973, p. A1). An April 26 article in *The New York Times* reported that the tribal council had refused to allow Clearwater's body to be buried on the reservation because he wasn't a Sioux Indians ("Wounded Knee Shooting," Waldron, p. L16). An April 28 *Argus-Leader* article reported that the John Adams of the NCC was advocating on behalf of Clearwater's widow for the funeral to occur in the village ("Indian's Widow," 1973, p. A1). *The New York Times* reported that Leonard Crow Dog, who had returned to Wounded Knee from his meditations at the Rosebud reservation, told officials

that negotiations with the occupants would not continue until Clearwater's body had been returned to Wounded Knee for burial ("Shot Kills Indian," Waldron, 1973, p. A1).

Angry AIM protesters threatened to force their way into the village with the body to bury it ("Movement Defies Sioux," Waldron, 1973, p. L20).

An April 27 article in the *Argus-Leader* reported that AIM leaders had said they would not negotiate with officials again until after they had finished mourning for Clearwater after April 30. Hellstern said that Dennis Banks had indicated that negotiations would continue, according to the article. AIM followers had told him that Banks would submit a proposal, though the leader had been the least cooperative in negotiations up until that point. Banks had also requested a meeting with Marvin Franklin of the Interior Department ("Chief Government Negotiator," 1973, p. A1). An April 24 article in *The New York Times* reported that leaders had refused to negotiate with the occupants for about 10 days because they hadn't been able to provide a "precise agenda" ("Oglala Leader Told," Waldron, 1973, p. A28).

Tensions continued to grow between tribal leaders and AIM followers advocating Clearwater's burial in Wounded Knee. AIM said they would march with a funeral procession up to the village with the body, and Dick Wilson and other tribal leaders claimed that they would stop the group with force if they attempted to enter. Officials met with representatives from both sides to settle the dispute before more violence ensued. According to an April 30 *New York Times* article, Frizzell was trying to "sell" the idea to mourners that they could bury the body on the nearby Rosebud reservation. Leonard Crow Dog had offered a plot on his family's land. It was reported that Frizzell's

efforts to solve the new issue had caused him to miss a meeting with AIM leaders in Wounded Knee (Waldron, 1973, p. C14). On March 1, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that six cars carrying Clearwater's mourners were permitted to enter the reservation for his wake ("Six Cars," 1973, p. A2).

Another Fatal Injury Occurs

On April 27, another injury was reported by *The Los Angeles Times*. A man had been shot after gunfire between authorities and occupants had broken out. The victim was airlifted out of the village for medical treatment at the request of the Indians ("U.S., Militant Indians," 1973, p. A1). On April 28, Lawrence Lamont, the 31-year-old Sioux AIM follower was announced dead from a bullet wound to the head. The article reported that a heavy exchange of gunfire had been initiated by the occupiers and that sporadic, heavy fire had followed Lamont's injury. Officials used teargas for the first time since the siege had begun to end shooting ("Shot Kills Indian at Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A3).

Lamont's mother told reporters that the victim's sister, who had a two-week-old baby, and several other people had been arrested after they were told that they would be permitted to ride out of the village with him in the ambulance. An April 28 article in *The New York Times* reported that Interior Department officials said they would try to get Lamont's sister released quickly ("Shot Kills Indian at Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A3). Lamont's family received permission to bury his body at Wounded Knee by the tribal council ("Body of Slain Indian," Kifner, 1973, p. A28).

An April 28 article in the *Washington Post* titled, “Bureaucracy Engulfs Wounded Knee,” by Jack Anderson blamed Wilson’s “vigilante” followers for the second death. It suggested that CRS employees may have been able to enforce a cease fire if they had been allowed into the village by Wilson’s men. Earlier reports had indicated that Hellstern allowed tribal police to keep CRS employees out because he thought that no successful negotiations would take place while Wounded Knee occupants were still mourning Clearwater’s death. The article charged that officials were more concerned with public relations than with ending the siege. As an example, it said that officials would not arrest unreasonable residents of Wounded Knee until it was absolutely necessary, though they had been obstructing justice. It inferred that the government didn’t want to take responsibility for turning away marchers who had come from Rapid City, so officials had let a tribal-run roadblock take care of ejecting the group (“Bureaucracy Engulfs,” Andersen, 1973, p. E31).

On April 29, new information about the April 26 firefight was reported by *The New York Times*. Officials had confirmed that a group of vigilantes had been involved in the shootout that had killed Lamont. Occupants had also allegedly recorded government radio conversations during the fight, which were played at a Rapid City press briefing. According to *The New York Times*, the tape had recorded officials saying, “Throw gas into that bunker and flush them out and we’ll have good targets.” Officials had previously held that they had only used teargas to stop the gunfight (“Movement Defies,” Waldron, 1973, p. A20).

Negotiations Begin Again

On April 29, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that negotiations between the occupants and government officials had started back up again. Hellstern was still reviewing an April 25 agenda delivered to him by a CRS employee, that he had said seemed “quite broad,” according to *The New York Times* (“Indians Set Up,” Waldron, 1973, p. L85). Dennis Banks and Leonard Crow Dog met with Department of Interior representative, Kent Frizzell at a neutral zone. Frizzell said that the two appeared willing to end the dispute before any further violence had occurred. He was also pleased that a cease-fire had been enacted since Lamont’s death. Frizzell told reporters that Banks and Crow Dog wanted to discuss the burial of Frank Clearwater, but he had told them that the issue was beyond the government’s jurisdiction. Frizzell also met with tribal elders at a house outside of the village (“U.S., Militant Indians,” 1973, p. A1). The *Chicago Tribune* reported on April 30 that it appeared that both sides felt the negotiations were a last effort before a physical confrontation would occur. Frizzell told reporters, “Time is running out. There is a question as to how long the government will exercise patience and restraint,” (“Wounded Knee Trade Post,” 1973, p. A15).

Fire Breaks Out

The village trading post burned to the ground at Wounded Knee when a fire broke out, according to an April 30 article in *The Los Angeles Times*. Apparently, AIM had been storing arms, ammunition, and radio equipment in the building, but authorities reported that they were unsure about what had started the fire. Fire trucks from Pine

Ridge did not come into Wounded Knee as they had been shot at trying to put out smaller fires. In addition, the occupiers had no electrical supply to extinguish it ("Fire Breaks Out," 1973, p. A1).

Impatient, Authorities Threaten to Take Village By Force and Again Block Press

Officials told reporters that the time was growing near when they must interpret AIM's actions as an unwillingness to end the siege peaceably and threatened to send troops in to take the village by force, according to *The New York Times*. The government's plan was to first airdrop fliers to the Indians to encourage them to surrender or face imminent attack. If necessary, officials said they would then infiltrate the village by force, using teargas to throw the occupiers off (1973, p. C14). Frizzell told reporters:

"In my opinion, if a negotiated settlement isn't obtained in the immediate days ahead, the government will be left no other choice than to take the position that the occupants of Wounded Knee really aren't interested in negotiations or a peaceful resolution. Once that takes place, I think the government will be required to take a look at the harder choices," according to an April 30 article in the *Argus-Leader* ("Wounded Knee Trading Post," De Vine, 1973, p. A1).

Authorities were also growing impatient with the press. A May 1 *St. Paul Pioneer Press* article reported that two journalists were arrested when they attempted to cover a march that was scheduled for April 22. The reporters, who were on assignment from the *University of Minnesota Daily*, said that they were stopped and arrested at a roadblock and then detained in Pine Ridge. Their car, which was on loan from the newspaper, was confiscated along with \$2,000 worth of photographic equipment. While the journalists doubted that they would be found guilty on charges of impeding a law enforcement officer during a civil disorder, they objected to the infringement on their first

amendment rights. The journalists said they were released and given their car back, but not their photographic equipment. Daniel Armitage, one of the reporters, said, "By putting me in jail, then releasing me, but restricting me from being in the area, they kept me from covering the march, which I have a right to do as a journalist," ("Pleas Due," Richardson, 1973, p. C27). On May 2, the *Argus-Leader* complained that there had again been a news blackout by government officials on the status of Wounded Knee negotiations "for the last two months" ("Government News Blackout," Woster, 1973, p. A1).

On May 1, the *Argus-Leader* reported that Frizzell had let three tribal chiefs and an interpreter into Wounded Knee because he believed that AIM's conference with traditional tribal elders might help to foster further negotiations. Frizzell had met with the elders earlier to explain that time was running out for a peaceful settlement. The elders were recognized by AIM as the true tribal leaders, rather than the elected officials. Fizzell believed they would be able to "act as a catalyst" to help settle the conflict ("AIM Leaders Confer," DeVine, 1973, p. A1).

Hellstern told reporters that the rumor that officials would use force to take Wounded Knee by May 4, "might be true," though he said that the government would not answer questions about the status of negotiations, according to a May 3 article in the *Chicago Tribune*. The article said that leaflets dropped on Wounded Knee had advised its occupants that the government would infiltrate the area with teargas ("Brandt, Nixon End Talks," 1973, p. 1B:4).

Hellstern denied rumors that the government had given a deadline before invading the village by force if an agreement hadn't been reached, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. He described the latest peace talks with AIM leaders as friendly, but unproductive. A significant stumbling block still seemed to be an agreement on how the Indians would lay down their arms and surrender ("Government Lifts," Malcolm, 1973, p. B15).

Conflict With Burials Continues

On May 1, the *Argus-Leader* reported that Clearwater's mourners had been allowed to enter the Pine Ridge for his wake, but officials contended that he was not to be buried there. Only six of the 20 carloads of mourners attempting to enter the reservation for the funeral were allowed to enter. The caravan was searched thoroughly, and two people were arrested by tribal police for carrying weapons. The wake took place at the home of Frank Fools Crow, with Leonard Crow Dog's permission. Crow Dog had told Clearwater's widow that she could bury his body on the Rosebud reservation, but it was still unknown whether tribal leaders had approved the burial because Clearwater's true ethnicity was still being debated ("AIM Leaders Confer," DeVine, 1973, p. A1). After the Rosebud tribal council initially rejected the burial, the group eventually allowed it to continue ("AIM Member's," 1973, p. F1). The decision was reversed in order to avoid a violent confrontation, according to a May 2 article in the *Argus-Leader* ("Government News Blackout," Woster, 1973, p. A1). After the body had already been buried, the *Argus-Leader* reported that Wilson had found evidence that Clearwater was

not an Apache Indian, but of Irish-decent. The *Argus-Leader* sympathized with Wilson's view while reporting the news ("Records Show," 1973, p. A1).

A May 4 *St. Paul Dispatch* article reported that Lamont's family had been unable to raise the \$2,000 requested from the funeral home where his body had been kept, but that the money was being raised for a relief fund. The article provided information for parties who wanted to donate money to help get Lamont's body buried. The *Dispatch* seemed sympathetic toward the Indians ("Indian's Body," 1978, p. C8). Officials told *The New York Times* that they had requested a surrender in exchange for allowing mourners to enter for Lamont's funeral. His body remained unburied ("Indians Get Pledge," Malcolm, 1973, p. C50). However, AIM leaders asked that a funeral for Lamont be allowed in the town, and officials eventually agreed that a small group of Lamont's immediate family would be allowed, but that they had to leave immediately after the ceremony was finished ("Government Lifts," Malcolm, 1973, p. B15).

AIM Leaders Sentenced

In the meantime, Russell Means and four others were indicted on charges of illegally transporting arms to Wounded Knee and crossing state lines with the intent to incite a riot, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. Means, who had been transported to Rapid City, South Dakota, was tried in Phoenix. He was sentenced to five years in prison and given a \$10,000 fine. A group of protesters supporting Means protested outside the building where he was tried ("Indian Leader," 1973, p. 1B, 4). A May 5 article in the

Argus-Leader reported that Means' bond had been reinstated at \$125,000 ("Nichol Reinstates Means' Bonds," Adair, 1973, p. A1).

Press Block Lifted But Tension Continues

A May 5 *New York Times* article reported more conflict between tribal authorities and the press. Five Colombia Broadcasting System (CBS) employees were arrested as they attempted to leave the village. Federal authorities then turned the reporters over to tribal police. Reporters said tribal police had confiscated their film and had begun to expose it but then gave it back and released the CBS employees without charges ("Federal Dispute Delays," Malcolm, 1973, p. D18).

The May 3 *Argus-Leader* reported AIM leader Bob Yellow Bird's announcement that tribal elders had helped AIM to come to an agreement with the government ("Spokesman Says Agreement," 1973, p. A1). The report conflicted with others from Wounded Knee that day that an agreement had yet to be reached and that the Indians were "reinforcing" themselves. According to a May 3 article in *The New York Times* reported, a pool reporter flying over Wounded Knee witnessed the militants fortifying buildings and digging around bunkers ("5 Accused of Plot," 1973, p. A25).

The Chicago Tribune also reported that the White House had offered to send five representatives to negotiate if the Indians agreed to surrender by May 11. The agreement was contingent on whether individuals with warrants issued for them would submit to arrest and whether the Indians would come out of the encampment unarmed (Brandt, Nixon End Talk, 1973, p. 1B:4). A letter signed by Leonard Garment officially extended

the peace offering to the Indians again, and officials delivered the papers in person to Wounded Knee (“Indians Get Pledge,” Malcolm, p. C50).

A May 5 article in the *St. Paul Dispatch* related an account from Kenneth Tilsen, an attorney for AIM, in which he and Frizzell, were arrested, un-arrested, and rearrested several times by tribal police as they were traveling to and from the house of Fools Crow for negotiations. Frizzell had remarked to Tilsen that “anything resembling a government on the reservation is a joke,” according to the article. Tilsen told reporters that the tribal law had completely broken down. The *St. Paul Dispatch* portrayed tribal government negatively reports of tribal government (“Tribe’s Law Claimed,” Lewis, 1973, p. A9).

Traditional Tribal Chiefs Act as Mediators as Surrender Agreement Solidifies

The May 6 *New York Times* announced that the petition submitted to have Wilson impeached was 1,395 short of the required 30 percent. The *Des Moines Register* reported that AIM had been seeking guidance from traditional tribal chiefs, so officials were attempting to use the headmen as mediators. Hellstern and Frizzell were working up another detailed proposal for how the Indians would surrender and disarm themselves. Officials anticipated that agreeing on how the Indians would disarm would be a major point of conflict for the April 5 peace proposal (“Indians Get Pledge,” Malcolm, 1973, p. C50).

On May 7, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that the Indians had agreed to disarm and surrender by Wednesday, May 9. Hellstern and Roubideaux made a joint announcement that the government would remove all armed personnel carriers while the

Indians surrendered their weapons and evacuated the village. Officials agreed to return all weapons to their registered owners within a week of the surrender. The article reported that while 11 tribal elders and Hellstern and Frizzell had signed the agreement, that Dennis Banks and Carter Camp had not signed it. A letter from Banks said:

“I have reviewed the agreement, and find that the document falls outside the protection of the U.S. Constitution. I will submit to the arms lay down because the chiefs and headmen have agreed. Also, AIM’s job is done here. It must be understood AIM was called on to aid these Oglalas in their struggle against repressive government forces” (“Indians in Siege,” 1973, p. A2).

Dick Wilson also objected to the proposal because he said that the Oglala elders had no legal standing with the tribe, according to a May 7 article in the *Des Moines Register* (“Accord at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A1).

The Indians had begun to comply with the agreement by May 7, according to *The Milwaukee Journal*. They provided a list of Indians and weapons in Wounded Knee as requested by officials. In addition to removing its carriers and sending White House officials to speak with AIM representatives, the government agreed to perform a thorough civil rights investigation into the Oglala Sioux tribal government. Authorities agreed to wait for 65-hours while the Indians held a funeral and mourned for Lamont on May 6. AIM lawyers also wanted time to raise bail for the Indian leaders who would be arrested when they left the village. Permanent residents would be allowed to stay (“Indians Comply,” 1973, p. A10). The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported that the new agreement was very similar to that on April 5, but it provided more detail on disarmament procedures. It said that Indians would be divided into three groups: residents, who would be allowed to return to the village; Indians with outstanding warrants against them, who

would be taken into custody; and all other occupants who would arrange for transportation from the village themselves. The article didn't indicate whether the other occupants would be arrested at a later date ("Wounded Knee Ready," 1973, p. A1). Conversely, the *Wichita Eagle* reported that the agreement stipulated that 12 or more of the Indians without warrants issued for them might also be subject to arrest ("U.S., Indians Finally Sign," 1973, p. A1). Those arrested would be taken on a bus to Rapid City, South Dakota rather than to Pine Ridge, "to prevent any possible conflict with the tribal government," according to a May 8 *St. Paul Pioneer Press* article. Those arrested would immediately appear in court, and the government would not make recommendations as to the amount of bond that should be posted for each ("Nixon Aides," 1973, p. A1).

According to the *Des Moines Register*, representatives on both side refused comment on whether the decision had been encouraged by hunger within the village. According to one reporter, who had snuck past blockades, Indian meals had been limited to beans, rice, and oatmeal ("Accord at Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1).

Siege Ends: Officials Bitter at Press and AIM

"Siege Ends as Indians Give Up Arms," read the front page of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* on May 8. The occupation had officially ended when 40 AIM followers gathered in the center of Wounded Knee and surrendered their arms. Authorities were disappointed that so few had surrendered, and believed that about 55 Indians had escaped, including Dennis Banks. However, officials told the media that Banks had

promised to turn himself in the following week. Per request, AIM provided a list of supporters that had participated, but it only included 35 names. At least 13 people had been arrested attempting to escape the night before they were to turn themselves in. Officials were also disappointed with the list of arms that had been provided to them, which included only a bore pistol and a peace pipe. "We certainly know there have been more weapons in the village than are on the list," Hellstern said. A CBS newsman who visited the village the week before had estimated that there were about 165 Indians occupying the village at the time ("Siege Ends," 1973, p. A1). According to an article in the *Chicago Tribune*, Hellstern told reporters that the list of arms and persons was short because, "It was clear that the intention was that the warrior types with warrants outstanding would attempt to infiltrate the perimeter and leave." The security circle of federal officers around the village had tightened in the days before the surrender because of anticipated escape attempts ("Wounded Knee Indians," 1973, p. A5).

Thomas Oxendine, public information officer for the BIA reported that the Indians requested an early evacuation on May 7, and officials were more than willing to comply. An article in the *Argus-Leader* reported that of the people who had turned themselves in, there were ten women and five children ("Wounded Knee Confrontation," 1973, p. A1.) The surrender was delayed for a few hours when two white men refused the terms of their surrender, locked themselves in their vehicle and wouldn't come out until a lawyer arrived to represent them ("Shot Signal End," 1973, p. A11).

Four CBS employees were arrested at Wounded Knee and taken to Rapid City, though they weren't prosecuted, according to May 9 report in the *Minneapolis Star*

Tribune ("Wounded Knee Occupation," 1973, p. A1). The *Milwaukee Journal* reported that Camp and Crow Dog had been charged with assaulting and obstructing federal officers, larceny, breaking and entering, and arson ("Dakota Siege," 1973, p. A1).

The *St. Paul Dispatch* reported on May 8 that the meeting scheduled with presidential advisor Leonard Garment and four other representatives would also be attended by traditional tribal elders instead of the tribe's elected government. The group was scheduled to discuss the 1898 US treaty with the Sioux, which granted the Indians all of the land west of the Missouri River in South Dakota. In addition, the article reported that while federal officials had agreed to perform an audit of tribal books and records, the Department of Interior would be exempt from the audit ("Nixon Aides Will Attend," 1973, p. A1).

A May 9 article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reported that Federal officers fired several shots in celebration to indicate that the siege at Wounded Knee had finally ended. Residents were allowed to return to their homes after the village was searched for weapons and criminal activity. Hellstern, still disappointed with the weapons that had been surrendered by the Indians said, "They just turned in a lot of old crap: old shotguns and rifles. The weapons turned in certainly were not all the weapons in there." The article also reported that "none" of the top AIM leaders had surrendered themselves on May 7 as three had already been arrested and one had escaped. The article contended that Frizzell had learned a lesson with the occupation. "If I were in control of such an event in the future, I would handle it the way law enforcement police handle it, just as you would deal with bank robbers and hijackers." Hellstern added, that news coverage of

the event “fed this like a forest fire” and that “the Indians were resolved to make a show of it.” Several agents would stay in the area for “peace keeping” for an indefinite amount of time (“Occupation Cleanup Ahead,” 1973, p. A21). In addition, the *Argus-Leader* reported that police had to stay to “clean up” the village (“Wounded Knee Confrontation,” 1973, p. A1). “The place is a mess,” remarked Frizzell, according to the May 9 *St. Paul Pioneer Press* (“Indian Action Cost,” p. A38). The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reported on May 9 that Frizzell estimated the cost of the entire occupation between five and seven million dollars. Superintendent Stan Lyman estimated the clean up cost at around \$240,000 (“Occupation Cleanup Ahead,” 1973, p. A21).

Wrap-Up Articles

Several of the newspaper reviewed published wrap-up articles, or articles that summarized the event and reported its outcome. The final articles seemed to reveal the overall views that the reporters and newspapers held about the event.

A May 9 article in the *Minnesota Tribune* detailed the condition of the village after the surrender. It reported that the carcasses of dead cattle and dogs that had been slaughtered for meat littered the sidewalks along with garbage that hadn’t been burned. In addition, the water system had been contaminated and electricity and phone services had been terminated. Flies and a pungent odor also plagued the village. Roads were torn up from personnel carriers, and bullet holes had been shot through most of the town’s remaining structures. Three buildings, including the trading post, had burned to the ground. Several of the resident said that they would relocate, never to return again. An

Oglala Sioux family returned to their house to find that their furniture had been removed, and most of their clothing and possessions were gone. Mrs. Red Eagle, who lived in the house with her family said, "I'm getting out of here. I thought AIM does good for Indians but they didn't. They said they wouldn't bother the Oglala people. I don't know why they did this to us." The Lansbergs, a couple in their late sixties said that they had lost everything when their house had burned down. Reporting in the *Minneapolis Tribune* was sympathetic toward Wounded Knee residents, and framed the occupiers as vandals and thieves ("Wounded Knee," 1973, p. A1).

A May 10 *Washington Post* article reported that Mrs. Lansberg, a Caucasian resident, didn't blame the loss of her family's house on anti-white sentiment. The article explained that the residents, especially those who had stayed throughout the siege, were more scared of harassment from tribal police than of AIM. A May 10 article in the *Argus-Leader* reported similarly that though the Lansbergs didn't blame the destruction of their house on AIM's racism, they chastised the Indians for their hypocrisy in destroying Oglala and white homes alike. They complained that AIM's original mission had been to help the Oglala people ("Wounded Knee Sioux," 1973, p. A246). The *Washington Post* was more sympathetic toward AIM than the *Argus-Leader* in these similar articles.

The *Washington Post* article also reported that though there was no stipulation in the agreement that the village could be searched by anyone other than the FBI, federal sources reported seeing five carloads of BIA investigators enter the village after the arrests had taken place. The article read:

“Federal officials denied the residents have been harassed or are in danger of retaliation. Despite those denials, there was evidence here today of ransacking of homes while the permanent residents were being processed by federal authorities at the main roadblock to the hamlet. The doors of some houses were smashed in and clothes and personal effects were scattered about, presumably during a search for hidden weapons. The trunks of a dozen automobiles owned by residents were pried open while authorities swept the area for booby traps and caches of weapons” (“Wounded Knee Sioux, 1973, p. A246).

The *Washington Post* went on to report that a team of nine CRS employees said that the reports were typical. They said it was “normal” for local authorities to harass those remaining after other authorities left (“Wounded Knee Sioux, 1973, p. A246). *The Post’s* coverage framed the BIA as vandals.

The *Des Moines Register* seemed sympathetic to AIM in some of its coverage. In a May 9 article, *The Register* said of Wounded Knee, “It was a strange affair—part publicity stunt, part real battle with lives on the line.” It contended that whether or not publicity about the Indians was good or bad, it had at least brought attention to Indian issues. The article contended:

“Yet for all their misdeeds, for all their blunders, they did fire a shot heard round the world. For days, they forced U.S. officials and citizens to think seriously of the situation of American Indians in what was once their land. They are the poorest, the least healthy, the least educated minority in the land. They had been quiet about it” (“A Siege Lifted,” 1973, p. A10).

Conversely, a May 9 article in the *Los Angeles Times* was less sympathetic toward AIM. The article quoted Hellstern, who said, “The Justice Department was the winner and AIM the loser because AIM lost a lot of support of the American people.” The article went on to quote Frizzell, “You only have to see the destruction in Wounded Knee

and you lose any sympathy for the occupiers and their self-proclaimed cause.” The article reported:

“AIM militants seized Wounded Knee to dramatize Indian demands for the rights given them by treaties with the United States and to try to force the overthrow of the Oglala Sioux government of Tribal Chairman Dick Wilson on the Pine Ridge Reservation” (“Militants at Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. A14).

The *Milwaukee Journal* also emphasized the devastation in the village. It quoted Wayne Colburn, chief of the US marshals service, who said, “The total devastation surprises me more than anything else. To my mind, that is probably the most tragic thing about the Wounded Knee incident” (“Indian Siege Cost Put at,” 1973, p. B7).

The May 10 *Wichita Eagle* also portrayed AIM negatively. It provided a quotation from Dick Wilson about the destruction. He said, “I expected it from those hoodlums and clowns. That’s the way they live. Their tactics have been in the past to destroy and burn every place they went.” The article also quoted Hellstern and Frizzell, who commented on the “wanton destruction” in the village. Hellstern went on to say, “I don’t think the meeting between White House representatives, AIM leaders, and traditional Oglala Sioux chiefs should come off. We cannot sit down with people like this and work out any improvements” (“Wounded Knee Residents Seek,” 1973, p. A1).

Similarly, a May 10 *Milwaukee Journal* article reported Hellstern’s comment that the meeting with Nixon’s advisors should have been cancelled because the occupants had not complied with the peace treaty signed when they failed to turn over all of the weaponry and a list of the names of all parties involved. Conversely, Clyde Bellecourt also charged that police had violated the pact when they allowed BIA police into the village while the surrender was underway. The article seemed to represent both sides of

the argument equally. It also included information about residents fearing retaliation from local police (“US Official, Indian Leader,” 1973, p. A1).

A May 9 *Chicago Tribune* wrap-up article also seemed neutral. It reported comments from Hellstern on the status of parties arrested, evacuated, or returning to the village. It also featured a photo of a man who was apprehended while attempting to sneak into the village (“Wounded Knee Siege Ends,” 1973, p. A3).

While Dick Wilson and other government officials felt the press hadn’t fairly represented their side of the Wounded Knee issue, Native Americans also felt that stories published by mainstream press had been misconstrued and slanted. *Akwesasne Notes*, which claims to be the first Native American publication with nation-wide circulation, sent a staff of seven to cover the event as it was happening. The paper’s publishers wanted to verify “whether those occupying the village were AIM or Oglala, and whether they were serious or seeking publicity” (“The Wounded Knee Trip,” 1973, p. 2)

Akwesasne Notes published the following statement in the Early Spring, 1973 edition:

“We believe Wounded Knee represents, for better or for worse, a whole new chapter in the history of native peoples of this continent. However, the distortion of the press and TV, the management of the news by the U.S. and government, has made it difficult for people to understand what really happened” (“How is it with us?” 1973, p. 2).

The paper contended that directly following the occupation, the media began providing misleading reports to the public. It claimed that AIM had come to the area because the Oglala people had asked for protection from Dick Wilson, who oftentimes used violence to intimidate reservation people. One article read:

“Some of the distortions which pervaded the media were set at this time. It was continuously called the AIM takeover, although AIM kept saying they were simply supporting the Oglala people. And the demands were clear from the first, although both government and media said they were uncertain just why the Indians were there” (“Oglalas Liberate Wounded Knee,” 1973, p. 12).

Reports of ineffective negotiations at Wounded Knee were also reported differently in *Akwesasne Notes*. It said that the US had defended their failure to negotiate with Indians because of the confrontational atmosphere at Wounded Knee. Erickson said, “Negotiations cannot be made at gunpoint,” (“To Follow the Trail of Big Foot,” 1973, p. 23). The Notes contended that Erickson was “apparently unconscious of the irony of the massive armament pointed at the Oglalas” (“To Follow the Trail of Big Foot,” 1973, p. 23).

The *Akwesasne Notes* didn’t place all the blame on reporters for what they felt was a misinterpretation of the story. The Notes wrote, “It was difficult for the press to know what to do about the U.S. statements. Newsmen were barred from normal routes to Wounded Knee” (“It’s Not Very Promising, U.S. Officials Say,” 1973, p. 17).

Coverage in Native American newspaper, *Wassaja* also differed greatly from that seen in general interest publications. *Wassaja* was a national Native American publication published by the National Historical Society that claimed a circulation of 65,000. *Wassaja*’s April-May, 1973 issues provided articles from each perspective of the argument, including articles describing the opinions of AIM leader, Vernon Bellecourt, Richard Wilson, Senator Mansfield. In addition to reporting the opinions of these players in the Wounded Knee issue, reports from *Wassaja* then attempted to report responses from opposing view-points. For example, one article included a statement by Dick

Wilson about the "attacks" he had been subjected to and his stance on the Wounded Knee situation. Wilson contended that the self-government granted the tribe allowed them the freedom to rule themselves and elect tribal council ("Pine Ridge President Defends His Position," 1973, p. 6). *Wassaja* also included a rebuttal to Wilson's argument in an article that described the poor conditions and poverty that Wilson's form of government had plagued the Oglala Sioux with ("Oglala Sioux Respond to Wilson Statement," 1973, p. 6). However, both of the articles criticized years of injustice from the American government.

An article in *Wassaja* reported of the Wounded Knee situation, "There is mixed reaction among the Oglalas themselves. Most agree that 'something must be done.' But many are opposed to violence. 'I don't think it's necessary,' said one man who refused to be identified." The article continued, "An atmosphere of fear pervades this community of shacks and small houses. Fear of the tribal officers, fear of the BIA, fear of the Federal Marshalls, and fear of reprisals against themselves once the Wounded Knee incident is ended ("Wounded Knee Resistance," 1973, p. 24).

Opinion Polls

Several articles published during Wounded Knee speculated on America's view of the event. In addition, several article summed up what they had felt about the situation as a reporter and what their view of other press opinions of the incident were at the time. An article by Robert Enstad in the *Chicago Tribune* said that reporters began to wonder about the validity of the event. He said that the "theatrics" demonstrated by AIM made

the event seem less newsworthy, as it was obvious that the occupiers were putting on a show for the media. He complained, "With all the gunfire that was reported, newsmen began to wonder why no one was seriously wounded or killed. Some speculated that no one was trying to hit anyone or that both the Indians and the expertly trained federal lawmen were exceedingly poor shots" ("Theatrics Overwhelm," Enstad, 1973, p. B14).

Several polls published at the time attempted to speculate about overall public opinion of the issue. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in a May 5 article, "The occupation, at least initially, received a surprising amount of support from the public—and attention from the press." The article contended that a Harris poll revealed that after the third week of the occupation, 51 percent of people surveyed sympathized with the occupiers, and only 28 percent sympathized with the federal government. The article contended that audiences sympathized the most with the Indians toward the beginning of the occupation. The article didn't, however, indicate where the surveyed sample had lived or any of their other demographic information. The article quoted an anonymous White House aide, who said:

"Outside South Dakota, the nationwide reaction is that the Indians can do no wrong, but maybe people will start to think that these people at Wounded Knee are just hoods and there will be a real backlash against legitimate Indian requests. And people are going to start thinking more seriously about it if they realize that surrendering to Indian demands means giving back Montana, Wyoming, the Dakotas, and all those other states" ("Indian Division," 1973, A18-A19).

The article cited the opinion of well-known Indian academic, Vine Deloria, who contended that white support was accompanied by "dilettanism," or a non-comprehensive

understanding of all the issues involved, according to the article (“Indian Division,” 1973, pp. A18-A19).

Another article in the *Minneapolis Tribune* reported the results of a Minnesota poll on public attitude toward Wounded Knee. There were 600 respondents from Minnesota polled. The article contended that, “Most Minnesotans don’t believe the government had done all it could for the Indians. But they no not condone the occupation of Wounded Knee, S.D.” The poll asked what had caused many of the problems, and some of the issues brought up were discrimination, lack of employment and education, poverty, and treatment by the government. However, when respondents were asked who was “directly” to blame for problems, 31 percent responded that the biggest problem was with the Indians themselves, due to their lack of initiative, though the survey said that 9 in 10 college educated respondents believed the government was most to blame for the problems. Another 63 percent of total respondents had indicated that they didn’t believe the government was doing everything it could for the Indians. Of those surveyed, 26 percent said that the Indians were justified in occupying Wounded Knee, while 61 percent said that they were not justified in doing so (“61% Say Wounded Knee Takeover,” 1973, p. 11B).

An article in the *Argus-Leader* reported that many Indians were not in support of the Occupation. A May 9 article reported, “Most South Dakota Indians were sympathetic to the occupation of Wounded Knee, although many Indians have been hopeful that the 70-day television spectacular would awaken America to their problems.” The article anticipated that the “showdown, although it perpetrated mainly outsiders for theatrical

effect, has set back the cause of good relations between South Dakota Indians and whites by many years ("Wounded Knee Confrontation," 1973, p. A1).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Coverage of the Wounded Knee occupation varied greatly between newspapers and even differed between articles in the same publications. As mentioned before, newspapers that sent their own in-house staff to cover the event tended to have more opinionated coverage, whether it was more sympathetic toward AIM, government forces, or tribal leadership. Associated Press and United Press International articles were frequently used by national and mid-western newspapers, and often framed AIM occupiers as “militants.” The term militant wasn’t widely used in the coverage written during the first two days of the occupation. However, it became more common in articles from the same wire services after the second day. It is not clear why most of the papers, with the exception of *The New York Times*, began using the term so frequently. One explanation is that it appeared in government press releases and wire service information, sources frequently used by the majority of papers reviewed. Baylor’s contention that newspapers tended to gather their information from traditional news sources was supported by the coverage reviewed. Most of the articles reviewed were written by the Associated Press or United Press International.

While press interest in the event was strong at first, historical and secondary sources indicated that newsmen were frustrated with news blackouts. The coverage reviewed also reflected this contention. While many of the articles favored the Indians during the first few weeks of coverage, coverage of the event began to appear less

frequently and in less prominent places toward the end of March, when the Indians were arguing back and forth with government agencies. Peace pacts were announced several times, but often fell apart within a day as both sides failed to uphold the agreements. Unless reporters snuck into Wounded Knee, they had to rely on government press releases and interviews with the local Sioux for their information. As the event dragged on with few newsworthy stories, press interest waned and seemed less supportive of AIM in several cases. As suggested by Enstad of *The Chicago Tribune*, reporters probably also grew wary of focusing their attention on AIM, who was staging some of the drama for the sake of the media ("Theatrics Overwhelm," Enstad, 1973, p. B14). Government officials suggested that the event would have ended much sooner, had the press not been involved. Federal officials and tribal police attempted to occlude the press from covering the events in person whenever possible, though they worked to feed self-serving information to them at the same time. Several reporters were arrested, harassed, and had their equipment confiscated during the course of the event.

Despite the common news sources available and limited access to the event, press agents managed to provide continual coverage of Wounded Knee. Though many of the details reported were the same, each newspaper placed their own biases on the stories. Whether the discrepancies were a result of each newspaper's location is questionable. AIM often accused South Dakotans of being highly racist, which may explain the anti-AIM sentiment in *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* coverage ("Indian Division," 1973, pp. A18-A19). However, other mid-western publications, such as the *St. Paul Dispatch* were sympathetic toward the group. Newspapers with national circulation also tended to

sympathize with the group, though *The Chicago Tribune*, one of the largest-circulating publication reviewed, clearly did not sympathize with AIM.

The *Chicago Tribune* ran articles by Robert Enstad that seemed different than all other contemporary coverage. Though Enstad later chastised the Indians for performing in front of the cameras, he admitted that he, like many other journalists had fallen for the performances provided by the group. Of all the articles reviewed, his seemed to be labeled with the most sensational, attention-getting titles, often predicting mayhem and bloodshed, rather than focusing on peace talks, as many of the other publications had done. By the end of March, it was likely that Enstad had returned from the field, as the *Chicago Tribune*, which had by far contained the most critical coverage of the AIM movement until that time, began running more neutral UPI articles. Thus, by placing many of the first articles about Wounded Knee on the front page, the *Chicago Tribune*, thought it was framing AIM as militants, was setting an agenda for the American People. By sending journalist Robert Enstad to cover the issue and by giving the articles good placement, the newspaper was telling the public that it was an important issue that they needed to know about. Later, when it put less value on the story by using information from press services, covering the issue less often, and by giving the articles less prominent placement, *The Tribune* was demonstrating to the public that the issue was no longer as important. Toward the end of the occupation, when Wounded Knee began to get more front-page coverage, *The Tribune* was telling its readers that the issue was once again important.

The New York Times didn't give prominent placement to Wounded Knee articles often, though some were placed on the front page. Articles written in the beginning and end of the siege and those covering serious injury and death received the most prominent placement. *The New York Times* coverage was sympathetic toward AIM and Indian problems and often framed the Indians as victims. It most often referred to the Indians as "insurgents" rather than "militants," which was most often used by other publications. According to the operational definitions included in the Methods section of this thesis, both terms indicated that the group was dissatisfied and rebellious, though the term militant suggested aggressive behavior. *The New York Times* was also critical of government authorities and Dick Wilson. Several stories discussed the way the government had prevented the press from covering the event with news blackouts and by arresting reporters and confiscating their equipment. *The New York Times* framed government officials as authoritarians attempting to flex their power at any given opportunity.

Coverage in the *New York Times* only seemed less sympathetic toward AIM on March 18, when the publication included information about the criminal backgrounds of AIM Leaders and accusations that they had been taking payoffs from the government. That article framed AIM leaders as petty criminals and con artists.

The Los Angeles Times also included coverage that was negative about AIM leaders on March 18. However, other coverage in the publication was more sympathetic toward Indian issues. Another feature article the day before had described the poor

conditions that reservation Indians had to endure. Wounded Knee articles also often received prominent placement.

The *Washington Post* didn't cover Wounded Knee nearly as much as some of the nationally circulating newspapers like *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*. *Washington Post* coverage seemed fairly neutral in its coverage, though like *The New York Times*, it seemed to advocate on behalf of the press' right to cover the event. For example, its coverage about Oliphant, the reporter that had been arrested for his involvement in the airdrop of supplies, seemed to imply that he was only fulfilling his assignment as an objective reporter, and hadn't actually aided in the drop.

Ironically, the Sioux Falls *Argus-Leader*, the largest circulating newspaper in South Dakota and that was located closest to Pine Ridge, mostly used stories from news services. Though the articles got very good placement, mostly on the front page, the paper either didn't have the funds to send in-house staff to cover the event, or it didn't deem the event worthy of the expense. The paper tended to be sympathetic toward Wilson. It quoted him often and even ran a feature about him on March 18, calling him "The Man in the Middle." Though early coverage of the event seemed fairly neutral, articles in mid-March began framing AIM followers as media-hungry militants. The Easter Sunday article that described AIM's "crucifixion" also framed AIM as a group of violent savages or media-hungry actors performing for the press. Opinion polls indicating that the majority of people within South Dakota didn't support the siege seemed to be supported by coverage in the *Argus-Leader*, which often framed the Indians as militants and criminals.

Newspapers that commissioned in-house staff to cover the event, in addition to or rather than using articles from news services like the Associated Press, provided coverage that seemed to identify with the residents of Pine Ridge, which were frequently interviewed for perspective. Reporters that were there seemed to reflect more of the emotions being felt by those involved in their stories. Ironically, the largest local paper, the *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, frequently featured Associated Press articles.

The *Kansas City Star*, *Minneapolis Tribune*, and *Wichita Eagle* also seemed sympathetic toward Wilson and the government. The papers quoted Wilson's criticisms of AIM often. They also emphasized Erickson's statements that the hostages weren't really free after they had told reporters that they were, and indicated that AIM was a group of criminals and militants who had kidnapped the residents at Wounded Knee. One *Kansas City Star* article went as far as to call average reservation Indians "docile pawns," framing the Indians as simpletons who didn't care about suppression from tribal politics or the government, though it ruled their lives ("Sioux Grievances Factional, Too," 1973, p. A1).

The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and *St. Paul Dispatch* sympathized the most with AIM out of all the mid-western publications reviewed. They included reports that hostages were more frightened of government officials than of AIM. In addition, speculations that the incident had begun after Wilson's men had beaten a 70-year-old woman were included. Overall, the articles framed Wilson as an authoritarian who used intimidation to gain Oglalas cooperation.

The *Des Moines Register* also tended to frame the Indians as victims. It provided extensive background about poor conditions on the reservation and included several quotations from parties that were anti-Wilson. One article detailed the harsh conditions on the reservation and humanized the Indians by describing their character and the conflicts they faced. It also reported that the hostages were free to go, despite Erickson's claims.

The frequency of stories about AIM and the prominent placement they sometimes received demonstrated that the press clearly wished to include the event in America's news agenda. National newspapers paid less heed to the stories than mid-western coverage, but that was to be expected, as the issue was closer to home for mid-western publications. Vine Deloria's contention that the press was interpreting Wounded Knee with a sort of "dilettanism," or a non-comprehensive view of all the issues involved seemed a valid point, when considering the coverage reviewed ("Indian Division," 1973, pp. A18-A19). The lack of coverage in newspapers about Native American issues prior to the event could explain why AIM felt that they had to go to extreme measures to draw attention to their grievances. *Akwesasne Notes* seemed to emphasize the lack of interest in American Indian issues by the United States as a whole, including the government and press, when it cited the contention of Criminologist Tom Murton, who held that the Indians had only taken hostages because they had been ignored for years, and this was the only way they knew to get the nation's attention ("It's Not Very Promising, U.S. Officials Say," 1973, p. 17). The publication's statement that the government was more concerned with public relations than with addressing the Indians' grievances also seemed

valid as vigilantes around the Wounded Knee perimeter were allowed to set up roadblocks and interfere with a peaceful resolution for several weeks without facing consequences from the government.

Wrap-up coverage of the event emphasized the destruction that had been brought to the village. It featured stories about residents that had been displaced from their homes, the costly repairs that were now necessary, and the millions of dollars that had been spent on the government forces. The Occupation of Wounded Knee had been a radical statement that didn't seem to have a winner. While the destruction had made the Indians look like savages, AIM had definitely brought Indian grievances to the attention of the nation. Perhaps, as Senator McGovern had contended after his first visit to the village for peace talks, the situation underscored the dangers that the reservation Indians continually faced.

Further Research

Further research of Wounded Knee media coverage could include a more comprehensive look at government press releases submitted to the press as well as an in depth analysis of other types of media coverage, including magazine, television, and radio coverage. While this study reviewed national, mid-western, and Native American publications, further study could be done into coverage and opinion polls in different regions of the United States and internationally.

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