

### **WKIII: the Never Ending Story...**

A South Dakota friend once observed that AIM heavy Russell Means and Indian-fighter Governor Bill Janklow had long enjoyed a relationship of codependency -- a political symbiosis that kept them both in the limelight, thereby keeping them in power in their separate domains.

Both of those men needed lots of publicity to survive; bathing their egos in the warm glow of media lights. Whenever things would quiet down and the limelight dimmed, Means would announce something outrageous that would attract the media, most often something offensive to Janklow. The Governor in turn would call the TV cameras for an equally inane response. This comic routine kept them front and center before the public, and eventually got Janklow into the U.S. House of Representatives and may have gotten him into the Senate had he paid attention to his own traffic laws and hadn't ended his career in detention for manslaughter.

With the internment of his symbiotic twin, Means' career went downhill as well, and he is still trying to revive it with occasional outbursts designed to horrify the public, but mostly befuddles them.

It appears that Tim Giago may have adopted the Means/Janklow model in taking up the fight with AIM. However, his attacks on AIM are not grabbing the attention that the M&J sideshow did. The American Indian Movement has been fading ever since its glory peaked in the 1970s, and its slow demise is cutting off the fodder that feeds Giago's creative juices and helps him meet his weekly column obligation. But still he occasionally pokes the aging warhorse with some piece about AIM's mischief in the last century. Lately it has been new revelations from FBI files about the AIM occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 -- WKII, as it has become known. AIM invariably retaliates in print, and amid the crossfire we find ourselves in what might be known in the future as WKIII.

But let's face it, AIM spokesman Bill Means, as smart as he is, is no Russell Means. He doesn't have Rus' stage presence before the cameras, nor the booming voice. So he retaliates in writing. But his press releases don't rouse much interest. Add to this the fact that, unlike big brother Rus, Bill usually makes sense, and making sense is not the stuff for making headlines.

I am thinking that it's about time for AIM to retire and let their legend be their history. As for Giago, he should consider putting away the old inkpot. Writing a weekly piece for forty years, as Tim claims, adds up to 2,080 columns. At roughly 1,200 words per column, that comes to almost 2.5 million words, most of them trashing the American Indian Movement, boarding schools, Catholics, and anyone who might appear to be encroaching on his claim to Indian press seniority. This doesn't attract much attention anymore either.

But, alas, there is no foreseeable end to the “Battle of WKIII,” for even as I write this column, I learn that Tim has dusted off his big black cowboy hat and is saddling up to hunt down scoundrels who offend his own unique sense of justice and truth. As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, he will be publisher and editor of a new weekly newspaper, to be called the Native Sun News. The new journal, after it is up and running, will likely be sold to a tribal government as have the last several newspapers he has launched (all the while decrying the propensity of tribal governments to suppress freedom of their newspapers).

Spinning his business venture into a humanitarian crusade, he tells what motivates him to this risky decision, and again it’s those tyrannical tribal governments. In announcing his new business, Giago says, “For too many years tribal governments have run roughshod over their members without recourse. Indian Country needs a watchdog, one that does not fear turning over a rock to see what is under it.” This from the man who dedicated scores of column inches in his editorials and weekly “Notes from Indian Country” to lionizing OST President Dick Wilson and his goons who trampled human rights and Lakota people throughout the Pine Ridge Reservation in the 1970s. His other hero was Navajo chairman Peter MacDonald, who shut down the Navajo Times newspaper precisely for looking under rocks.

Amid the economic demise of newspapers nationwide, Indian country should be concerned about the Native press, and we should support Indian newspapers by advertising in them and subscribing to them. And I wish the best to any man or woman with the courage to begin another Indian newspaper in this harsh economic climate. Nonetheless, having seen members of my family on the receiving end of many attacks without recourse by Giago’s defunct Lakota Times, I cannot help but feel that we are in for a new wave of self-serving sanctimony and unending editorial attacks on those he considers critics, detractors or enemies.

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Charles E. Trimble is Oglala Lakota, born and raised on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He was principal founder of the American Indian Press Association in 1970, and served as executive director of the National Congress of American Indians from 1972-78. He is retired and lives in Omaha. He may be reached at [cchuktrim@aol.com](mailto:cchuktrim@aol.com)