Solidarity From Anti-Authoritarians

Leonard Peltier

1990

Upon my arrest on Feb/6/76, some of the first groups of people who came to show solidarity, along with my own People, in recognition of my status as a Prisoner of War, were the anti-authoritarian groups of both Canada and the U.S.A. The respect, recognition, love and solidarity they gave not only to me but to my People is something I will always cherish and hold dear to my heart. This show of solidarity proved to me that not all Euro-Americans were our enemy.

Throughout the first months of our organizing the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee (LPDC), the anti-authoritarians were the people who gave us what knowledge, resources, and skills they had to build an effective organization. I questioned why they would help my People and myself, as at the time, we believed all white people were wasichus; the evil ones. They proved to us that this was not the case and that they too hated the wasichus. They too were resisting and fighting imperialist oppression being committed by their race, but not their People. They did not consider themselves to be part of a People so evil.

Now that my case has gained international attention and is becoming a cause to rally around, other Peoples are standing with us. But the first people who supported us, at least the strong-hearted ones, are still with us. These people, whom my own People call the good-hearted ones, were with me from the beginning of my imprisonment. I was very concerned when I heard that some of them, who are also imprisoned warriors, were not going to be recognized as political prisoners or POWs. Neither I nor my People want to work with those who will not recognize their own warriors. So I was pleased to hear that FN! [Freedom Now!] and other such organizations have changed their views on this very critical issue.

From the beginning of these new organizations, one of the questions I repeatedly asked was how they defined political prisoners and prisoners of war. Some wanted to blanketly define all Indian prisoners as political prisoners or POWs. This I could not agree with. There is a certain truth to it; because of imperialist oppression, through socio-economic conditions or outright aggression against Indian Nations, all Indian prisoners are in a sense political prisoners. But I for one, along with all traditionalist and progressive Indians, cannot identify as political or justify in any way, someone who has, for example, raped a sister, molested a child, or murdered an elder. I decided I would have to withdraw my name from any organization which used this blanket type of definition. Again, I was pleased to learn that this was not going to be the policy of these organizations.

My greatest disappointment, in all my years of struggle, occurred just recently, when I saw the lack of support for the courageous warriors at Oka. The knowledge that some of my own People failed to stand up to protest the invasion of Oka broke some of my spirit as a warrior. But it also awakened me to the realization that I must work harder to build unity among my own People and their nations.

In today's world, we see nations whom many of us considered allies turning into new imperialists to join the old. We as warriors, and our organizations, must build our own foundation of unity from which to struggle, to protect the environment, stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and to resist colonialism. There are still a few small nations holding strong — but in truth, we now have to depend on ourselves for sanctuary in the struggle to free our homelands. We must build a unity so strong that no matter how oppressive our enemy becomes, they cannot destroy it.

Through this Tribunal, let us begin a new day, a new organization, a new movement. Let us hold our fists high, and put the oppressors on notice that we have just begun to fight, for not only our political prisoners and prisoners of war, but for our nations and for our freedom.

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