

Wounded Knee Action

St. Paul, Minn.

Jurors in the Wounded Knee trial, which ended with a dismissal of charges against two Indian militants, have started a campaign to stop all further court action in connection with the occupation of the South Dakota reservation village.

Ten of the 16 jurors and alternate jurors signed a letter to Attorney General William Saxbe asking that the justice department not appeal the case against American Indian Movement leaders Dennis Banks and Russell Means.

They also asked that the government dismiss charges against about 90 other persons in connection with the armed occupation of the hamlet in 1973.

U. S. District Court Judge Fred Nichol dismissed all charges against Banks and Means after one juror became ill and the government refused to allow the remaining 11 to decide the case. The judge said the government had mishandled the case.

Therese Cherrier, the juror who was unable to continue deliberations because of illness, was the first to sign the letter in the week following the September 16 dismissal of the case.

"A government that cannot in an eight-month trial present enough evidence against the two leaders of the Wounded Knee siege to secure a conviction on any count should for moral and ethical reasons drop the criminal charges against all

the other Indian people and their supporters," the letter said in part.

It said the jurors "would not have voted to convict because each of us concluded there was not enough evidence to do so."

The jurors said that on Monday they had formed an organization called "Jurors and Others for Reconciliation" to urge Saxbe and others to support "an effort to bind up the wounds that have been caused by this, our longest and perhaps least honorable war."

Of some 124 persons indicted in the Wounded Knee incident, 35 have been acquitted; there have been no convictions.

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