13 American **Indians Arrested**

Members of the American Friends Service Committee and the Franciscan Center express shock and dismay at the arrest and indictment here in Nevada of thirteen American Indians who were on their way to deliver medical supplies and food to those in need at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. The "mercy caravan" left Los Angeles with vital supplies donated by church people and other concerned citizens. Television coverage in Los Angeles made it very clear that this was an open mission of mercy. The Indians in the caravan were stunned when they were arrested under circumstances

of extreme danger to them.

The treatment they received severely questions our constitutional right to assist one another when in need. It has long been established as a basic right to offer assistance, particularly medical aid and food, to the needy. "It is incomprehensible to us that these Indians were arrested for what we would see as a basic act of mercy' stated Professor Leonard Storm spokesman for the American Friends Service Committee. Storm continued "We are further shocked at the treatment of the court in this matter. The bails, which are normally reserved for the most severe cases where acts of violence have been committed, were set for simply transporting food and medical supplies. The supplies were to be passed through church agents (representatives of the National Council of Churches) to those suffering. Wounded Knee in itself is a symbol of the injustices done to the native Americans in our nation's history. The arrest and subsequent indictments are a clear indication that such injustice is not a matter of past history."

"We are overwhelmed at the lack of even basic decency on the part of the Justice Department in not allowing those released to receive their own property and vehicles in order to return to their families to await trial" said Fr. Louis Vitale, Director of the Franciscan



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Center. Fr. Vitale went on to say "Those of us who have the professional role to minister to the needy are aware that these people were arrested for what we consider our daily duty. None of us would have declined to have performed the basic mission of mercy that they had undertaken We are aware that what happened to them could happen to anyone trying to help his brother."

Those interested in helping with the needs of those arrested may make contributions through the American Friends Service Committee and the Franciscan Center, 382-5630, Post Office Box 7339, Las Vegas, Nevada,

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