

Dark Ages Clasp the Salvo Root  
#1 1989

Dear Andrew letter, peyote,

I checked the International Indian Treaty Council and an Indian out in the northwest but no one had heard of the case you mentioned about Native American Church members who could not submit to drug testing because of the peyote ceremonies. What I did dig up in the New York Times of March 21, 1989 was the case of two Native Americans who were being denied unemployment benefits because of their use of peyote. They were, as a matter of fact, counselors at a clinic for the rehabilitation of those using peyote and were denied benefits on the grounds of "misconduct". The Oregon Supreme Court ruled that the denial of benefits violated the mens' constitutional rights under the First Amendment, the state appealed that ruling to the U S Supreme Court, which sent the case back to the state court. The Oregon Supreme Court ruled that although peyote was an illegal drug under Oregon law, the Constitution barred prosecution for the religious use of peyote. No mention was made if the men received their back unemployment benefits. This is just another typical case where the Indians are shunted between State and Federal Courts, more often than not ending in disaster for the Indians. No mention was made of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, passed in 1978, guaranteeing the right of the Indians to use and possess sacred objects in the use of religious rites and ceremonies. And what about the attempt last year, of the government to dump atomic sludge on the peyote fields in Texas? If the government doesn't get them one way, it gets them another.

Peyote <sup>has</sup> always been one of the drugs I respected. The Indians call it "medicine" because you are supposed to learn from it what to do for yourself. Once, taking it, I saw a picture in my mind of what was going to happen at the Sundance next day, Leonard being pierced twice in the chest and twice in the back and the piercing broken by four horses, pulling in opposite directions. Once I was drinking some

peyote tea with some Indian freinds and we were discussing soap detergents. Someone mentioned Joy and we all experienced it. The interesting thing about peyote with the Indians is that it is almost always used in highly contolled circumstances, in all night meetings, with people sitting around in a circle, and no one allowed to leave or enter. There is singing and drumming, not only lby the leader, but by anyone who wants to participate, and people are allowed to speak about what is on their minds, what is concerning them at the present moment. Early in the morning water and ceremonial food is passed around so that people may regain their strength, and then everyone usually takes a nap. It's totally unlike our own use of drugs, done on an individual basis under any circumstances and anywhere we please. I know from my own experience with LSD and mescaline that drugs can be mind opening, indeed how did I become clairvoyant, but I also know they can be easily abused, and I took too much, and blew my immunee system. So since we ~~now~~<sup>NON-INDIANS</sup> operate on a free basis all I can say is caution, we have no one to guide us but our own minds, to which, alas, we do not always listen.

If the Indians are deprived of their peyote they will lose a valuable tool for opening people to power and consciousness, which is really what their religion is all about. Already the peyote becomes scarcer and scarcer and the quality defiled.

Thank you for asking,

Hannah Weiner