

# No More Columbus Projects- U of T Pull Out Now!

The Columbus Project is a multi-million dollar astronomy telescope proposed for Mount Graham in Arizona. The observatory is planned on a sacred Apache burial ground and threatens the unique ecosystems on Mount Graham. The University of Toronto astronomy department is not officially a partner in the observatory but continues negotiations.

- They argue they are not officially involved but we want them to officially pull out of this outrageous project!

## History:

The University of Arizona, in collaboration with the Vatican, German Max Planck Institute and the Italian Arcetri Observatory have spent millions lobbying Congress and suing Apaches and environmentalist. They have obtained the first peacetime exemption of a project from all U.S. human rights and environmental laws in the history of the U.S. Congress. In a midnight biltz they sneaked in a rider in the final hours of the U.S. Congress without public hearing. So far, the courts have determined that the rider exempted the Mt. Graham project from all U.S. environmental and human rights laws.

## Native Rights Issues:

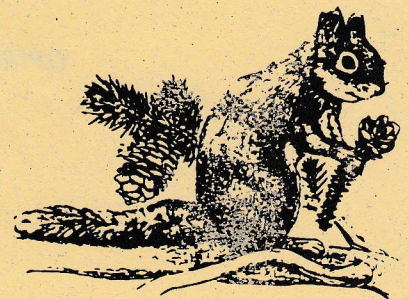
The Vatican, using two Jesuit priests, one the head of the Vatican Observatory, has submitted affidavits in the U. of Arizona lawsuit against the Apache people. The Jesuits argue the scared Apache mountain is not sacred - despite the signed opposition petition of 15 Apache medicine persons, three unanimous Tribal Council resolutions, massive scholarly documentation and testimony of expert Apache anthropologists. Though Apache elders, medicine people and the Tribal Council protested months before construction on the summit site, Vatican and Max Planck bulldozers and chain saws totally ignored them.

## Environmental Issues:

The smallest economically feasible observatory would ecologically destroy one-quarter of one of the most fragile forest ecosystems in the world. This very small, 480-615 acre, boreal or Hudsonian (spruce-fur) relic forest is an Pleistocene cradle of evolution having 18 unique-to-the-world boreal plants and animal which evolved on this isolated desert "island" mountain summit after glacial recession. The observatory would deforest the heart of the best boreal habitat of the Mt. Graham red squirrel, one of the most endangered small mammals in North America.

## Alternatives:

Studies show 37 better sites in U.S. and a definitely superior Mauna Kea in Hawaii. All astronomers admit there are alternatives. Max Planck says they would love to go the Hawaii but can't afford it. The Vatican has twice told Catholic press there are alternative sites available.





# Where does the University of Toronto stand?

In May 1991, the University of Toronto's astronomy department was invited by the University of Arizona to become a co-sponsor of the Columbus Project (yes, named after Christopher Columbus!). The Columbus Project would be the centrepiece telescope of the Mt. Graham International Observatory.

The official U of T position at this time (outlined in a letter by Vice-President of Research James F. Keffer in 1991) is that a "careful and rigorous review" will be conducted in the cultural and environmental issues surrounding the Columbus Project should resources be secured to support U of T participation in it. Even after listening to some of the objections surrounding the project, the U of T astronomy department decided in June 1992 to keep the door open to participation. It is trying to secure funds in the range of several millions of dollars by the sale of much of the land surrounding the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill.

Why discuss the cultural and environmental issues after the U of T secures funds for involvement? These issues warrant serious consideration NOW!

- Contact U of T President J. Robert Prichard at Simcoe Hall, M5S 1A1, 978-2121
- Contact the Astronomy Department Chair Prof. E.R. Seaquist at M5S 1A7, 978-3150

## What Else Can You Do?

Contact the Catholic Church:

The pope told Indians in 1987 in Phoenix, AZ to protect their culture. Now he is annihilating it. One of the Apache lawsuits, Jesuit Father Geo. Coyne, head of the Vatican Observatory, said that Apache religious beliefs on Mt. Graham are "a kind of religiosity which must be suppressed with all the force we can muster". His affidavit says the Vatican will build because no "authentic Apaches" believe the mountain is sacred. He ignores the affidavits and resolutions of the Apache medicine people, tribal council and elders. The affidavit of the other Jesuit, Father Cahs. Polzer, has been discredited by his own colleagues.

- Telephone Father George Coyne, Vatican Observatory, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 85721, tel. (602) 621 3230/3225, fax - 1532.
- Telephone Archbishop Aloisius M. Ambrozic, 355 Church Street, M5B 1Z8, 977-1500.

Get involved! Join the new working group opposing U of T participation in the Columbus Project. Next meeting:

March 22, 1993

5 PM

OPIRG office, 455 Spadina Ave. Room 201  
(Spadina and College)

Call 324-0918 or 598-2199 for more information.

*OPIRG is a student group that works on environmental and social justice issues*