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Vikings' group says Columbus is getting too much exposure

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The leader of a national group headquartered in Media that maintains the Leif Ericson discovered America and not Christopher Columbus wants the President to declare Tuesday a new "Discovery Day" holiday.

"The adrenalin starts flowing" when we see all these Columbus Day activities, said Ivar Christensen, president of the Leif Ericson Society, whose limited international membership of 999 includes former Vice President Walter Mondale, the Democratic presidential candidate.

Columbus Day, actually Oct. 12, will be observed as a national holiday on Monday following parades in many cities throughout the country on Sunday.

And that rankles the Viking group.

"They parade on Sunday and they celebrate on Monday yet the 12th comes out in

the middle of the week, giving them three days which is really ridiculous," said Christensen, who has asked President Reagan to create a new Discovery Day.

When? "On Oct. 9 naturally," he said, which happens to be the unofficial observance of Leif Ericson Day.

"We can't have so many holidays," Christensen said. "Somebody has to work, so I think the President is still considering it."

Christensen also brought the problem to Mondale's attention after the Democratic presidential candidate noted that since he is Norwegian and his running mate, Geraldine Ferraro, is Italian, they should be able to work out a satisfactory solution on who discovered America.

"We are sitting on pins and needles and hope that a compromise will not jeopardize your good standing in our organization."

Christensen wrote to Mondale, admittedly tongue in cheek.

He also-challenged Ms. Ferraro to a debate on the issue.

"We have promised a full disclosure of our academic credentials if she will do the same," Christensen said, chuckling about his allusion to the controversy over Ms. Ferraro's income tax return disclosures.

Columbus, his expedition financed by a Spanish queen, first sighted the American coastline in 1492. Plans are now under way to celebrate that historical event with a 500th anniversary party and world's fair in 1992.

"I find a quincentennial amusing," says Christensen. "A belated reward for winning the silver medal in the 'discover America' contest, we presume."