

Gerry Thompson

April 29, 1982

Bob Oliver

Bhagwan

Meetings were held in Madras on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning, April 27 and 28, under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Justice's mediation service. John Mathis, based in Seattle, represented U.S.D.J. Also in attendance were Bob Davis and some of his clientele; a delegation of Antelope residents and other local ranchers; and Mike Sullivan, district attorney for Jefferson County.

You doubtless read press accounts in The Oregonian of the meeting, which did not make it sound terribly exciting.

On the morning of April 29, Mike Sullivan called me. He is extremely agitated following the meetings, which he said resulted in little but expressions of hatred by the older residents. He said he wants us to know that, in his judgment, there is a distinct possibility of violence against followers of the Bhagwan. He says he will keep us fully advised. I told him if something happens that is beyond the capabilities of local residents to deal with, he can count on immediate aid from this office.

Later in the day, I spoke with Bob Davis. Bob said he has been in many difficult situations, but he has never perceived such an intensity of hatred as that exhibited at the meeting by the older residents, especially when they were not before cameras. He said he and several of his clients were threatened with harm during the course of the Tuesday evening meeting. (You may recall Bob was described as the group's "hired gun" in a Journal article recently. After the meeting, Bob said, a rancher approached him wearing a necklace made of 30-caliber bullets strung around his neck and asked, "Are you Davis?" Davis says when he acknowledged his identity, the man asked further, "Let me see your gun." Replying that he had no weapon, Davis said he was told, "You son-of-bitbhh if you ever show your face in this part of the country again, you damn well better have a big gun." Davis said a number of other older residents within earshot applauded these remarks and said, "Give it to him!"

Sullivan and Davis agree it is impossible to talk rationally with many of the older residents, who refuse to acknowledge existence of any rights on the part of the Bhagwan's followers. John Mathis, with whom I also talked, agrees.

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Another meeting has been scheduled in The Dalles for 3:00 p.m. on Monday, May 3, in the office of Keither Mobley -- city attorney for both The Dalles and Antelope. This meeting will involve Davis, John (a leader among the Bhagwan's followers), and a man named Smith, who seems to have emerged as a spokesman for older residents in Antelope. (I believe I met Smith when I attended an earlier meeting in The Dalles. At one point a member of the county commission said it was important to remember that everyone ought to be fair -- and the man I recall as Smith jumped up, began yelling and cursing, and stomped out of the room saying, "That attitude is what's selling us down the river!") This is not a public meeting, but will involve an attempt to work out some kind of compromise -- such as allowing the Bhagwan and his followers to move their operation entirely out onto the Big Muddy, in return for abandonment of Antelope.

Mathis will return on May 6, for a 3:30 p.m. meeting in Antelope which will be public, and -- if anything is achieved at The Dalles -- will be one more attempt to work something out. (It should be borne in mind that the 1000 Friends doubtless would adamantly oppose this compromise, because it would involve some development at the Big Muddy Ranch.)

While I do not think the time has come for active participation by this office in the proceedings, I believe we ought to give thought to whether it is appropriate for the Governor to make some statement. Sullivan and Davis both say many of the older residents in the area appear to be proceeding under the assumption that the Governor will condone any action taken to clear out the newcomers. We all know the Governor did not say that, but many entertain that perception. It may be that, based on Monday's meeting in The Dalles, and looking forward to the May 6 meeting in Antelope, the Governor could issue a public statement expressing his hope that an amicable solution to the controversy can be agreed upon, but also his determination in any event to assure the rights and safety of all parties.

cc: Denny Miles
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