



BEND RESEARCH, INC.

August 23, 1984

NOV 15 1990
Governor Atiyeh

The Honorable Dave Frohnmayer
Attorney General of the State of Oregon
Justice Building
Salem, Oregon 97313

Dear Mr. Frohnmayer:

The hottest legal issue in our State is clearly Rajneeshpuram, and you are just as clearly one of the central figures in that issue. I am writing this letter in support of the followers of Rajneesh. And I urge you to visit their town.

As we both know, there's the law and there's the law—that is, you can treat this issue "by the book," harshly, or with a gentle hand. I first visited Rajneeshpuram about two years ago, motivated entirely by curiosity. I was just as skeptical as the average non-follower when I arrived for my first visit, and I had probably formed more than the average number of negative conclusions, prior to that visit. But I took the tour they offer, mingled, and asked all of the tough, even nasty questions I could think of. My questions were answered fully and frankly, and without rancor. I came away convinced that the social experiment of Rajneeshpuram is precious, one that you and I should try to defend. I have since returned to their town twice just to enjoy the people and watch their energy. I conclude that Rajneeshpuram just may be the happiest town in America. They must be doing something right!

At a party last Christmas, I learned from Marla Rae that, as of that time, you had not visited the town. I urge you to do so. Your actions will have a major influence on the fate of this group. If you see them and talk with them, I'm convinced you will take a more gentle approach.

As a statement of my personal credo, I enclose a copy of my recent commencement address at the University of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Harold K. Lonsdale
President

EKL:skm
Enclosure
cc: The Honorable Norma Paulus

1B:23

Goodbye, Bhagwan

Well, he's gone. And a lot of folks are relieved.

But his sudden departure leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Was he really running away to Bermuda to avoid prosecution? (Don't we have an extradition agreement with Bermuda?) And was he really guilty of crimes, or just disgusted with a country that would chain and manacle an innocent-until-proven-guilty human being and haul him from jail to jail for 10 days without allowing him bail? We may never know the answers to these and other questions. Will any of the so-called investigative reporters be able to get the answers, or have they sufficiently alienated themselves from the Rajneeshes to preclude them from ever getting the full story?

The Bhagwan said "There is no God," and most people didn't want to hear that. He preached free love, and most people didn't want to hear that either (although a flock of folks secretly engage in promiscuity and extra-marital relationships). Some of us feel that he was railroaded out of the country, in a movement spearheaded by bigots, religious and otherwise. Most of our government leaders, both elected and those-who-would-be-elected, made political cannon-fodder out of him. And one can't overlook the decisive role played by the media. The newspapers and TV shaped the opinion of most of us. How many of those who opposed the Bhagwan ever actually visited Rajneeshpuram to observe that vibrant, happy town of 3000 intelligent people living off the land?

Sometimes it's hard to remember that the Pilgrims came to America to escape religious intolerance. The legacy they've given us is that we have religious freedom only as long as we do it the Anglo-Saxon, Christian way. Maybe this was one time when the silent majority — those who rightly felt that the Bhagwan wasn't hurting anyone and should have been left alone — shouldn't have remained so silent.

The harassment and abuse heaped on this gentle man is something that all of us, as freedom-loving Americans, can be ashamed of. We can't help but wonder what might have happened if, like many spiritual leaders before him, the Bhagwan had not pleaded guilty and run away but had stood his ground and suffered the consequences.

Harry Lonsdale