

Rajneeshees—facade or fact?

by BILL DRIVER
Special to The Weekly Reminder

There's an old saying that goes like this: "Don't listen to what they say, watch what they do."

Members of the Oregon State Legislature, the Wasco County Court, the media, and the public should keep that old saying in mind when they are dealing with many of the leaders, lobbyists and public

analysis

relations people who represent the followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh.

If, like many of our state legislators, you just take the tour of the Rajneesh property and accept at face-value what you are told, you might agree with Wasco County Commissioner Rick Cantrell's early assessment of them.

"As for myself, I have found our newcomers polite, cooperative, and honest, and will do business with, associate with, and respect them as I do the rest of you my friends of Wasco County."

However, if you do a little more looking into what the Rajneesh have actually done since July of 1981, you will have a much different assessment. You will find an amazing difference between what they have said and what they have done.

You will see that in many cases, the Rajneesh spokesmen deal in facades. Facades about their long-stated intentions of being a "simple farming community". Facades about taking over the tiny city of Antelope. And facades about Ma Anand Sheela's contention that "We deal respectfully and lovingly."

The facades tell you something about many of the Rajneesh leaders and public relations people. What's behind the facades tell you something different, something very different.

SIMPLE FARMERS?

The Rajneesh contention that they came to Oregon primarily to farm provides the most glaring example of just how great the difference between Rajneesh facade and fact has been.

Over and over again during their first year in Oregon, various Rajneesh spokesmen stated that they came to Oregon to farm. Repeatedly, they denied accusations that the real plans for their land, then zoned exclusive farm use, involved far more than creating a farming commune.

During an interview a month after the Rajneesh arrived in Oregon, Sheela stated, "We are just involved in farming. All we want to do is create a lovely farm."

Early plans suggested that between 20 and 50 workers would be required.

Within another 30 days, Rajneesh spokesmen asked for and received permits from Wasco and Jefferson Counties to bring in 54 trailers, to house some 200 farm-workers they needed to "make the land green."

Residents in Antelope and local ranchers began wondering. Some contacted 1000 Friends of Oregon to examine the need for more than 200 workers. The Rajneesh, trying to assure them there was no need to worry, invited several down to the ranch for a tour. The farmers were not assured.

One said, "It only took a few minutes to see that what we were seeing was a construction site, not a farm."

Within another 30 days, the Rajneesh presented plans to the Wasco County Court to incorporate a city on the ranch.

Many were concerned that the Rajneesh were going to develop a center for visitors interested in various therapy and training sessions. Sheela assured an interviewer "We have no therapy programs and no meditation center here, we are only farmers."

During the Wasco County Court's (commission) November 4, 1981 hearing, the Rajneesh presented a plan for a rural-like city designed to meet the needs of the

farmworkers.

"Our plans for the ranch depend on our ability to provide basic support services for the people who work there, such as good medical facilities and shopping areas."

Don Smith, an Antelope resident, thought they had other motives and testified, "I would like to emphasize that the need for incorporation is not for a group of property owners seeking a city charter for the mutual benefit of services, but for a corporate entity in order to circumvent the land use laws."

After 10 minutes of debate, court members Cantrell and Virgil Ellett voted to allow the incorporation election to be held.

Commissioner Jim Comini voted no on the grounds that the creation of a city on land zoned exclusively for farm use was improper under Oregon land use law.

In the months between the November 1981 hearing and the May 1982 incorporation vote (the Rajneesh voted 154-0 for incorporation) the debate over what the Rajneeshees intended to do with their farm and proposed city continued.

Rosemary McGreer, a rancher neighboring the Rajneesh ranch, summed up the feelings of many when she protested, "They have tried from the very beginning to create a city and all they've done is come in a thousand backdoors to do that very same thing."

The testimony of Rajneesh attorney Ed Sullivan before the Land Use Board of Appeals seems to bear her out. He stated, "Our ultimate desires are to place urban levels of uses (in the area)... We've got to go with what is possible and lawful right now which is a rural level of uses."

In March 1982 the Rajneesh released a "Ranch Farm Plan" that attempted to justify a population of more than 2000 people on the ranch, including 713 primary and secondary farm workers.

The ever-changing estimates of needed farm workers drew the attention of some.

Donna Smith of Antelope noted, "Last August it was 50 farm hands needed. By September, it was 280 ranch hands needed. At the March 11 (1982) citizen's advisory council it was 713 farm hands and twice as many for support services."

She called the ranch plan "a ploy to gain permission to build the largest city in Wasco County."

Again, Rajneesh spokesmen denied the allegation. According to Mary Catherine, currently one of the Rajneeshees' primary lobbyists before the legislature, the city would be "a scale more like a town. What we want to do is have sufficient housing for the people who will be working in the greenhouses and orchards. We'd like to keep the rural feeling of the land and live in harmony with the wildlife that is there."

Although it sounds very nice, Mary Catherine's description seems to run contrary to current Rajneesh plans.

Currently, under construction in Rajneeshpuram is a five-building complex in which about a dozen different therapy and meditation programs will be conducted. What did Sheela say about such programs a year ago?

According to Swami Wadud, Rajneeshpuram's director of Community Development, the Rajneesh are planning more housing, a school, an adult education center, warehouses, factories ("We'll be doing very light manufacturing here, perhaps furniture, perhaps cosmetics"), a hotel, and a convention center ("We feel like the destination resort possibility for the city is very great.")

Wadud's unveiling of the Rajneesh plans came during a November 1982 television discussion filmed in Rajneeshpuram. Even the people in attendance who had been predicting such non-farm development for months were shocked by the magnitude of the plans.

Paul Gerhardt, land use planner for 1000 Friends of Oregon, noted the earlier Rajneesh contentions that the city would be rural in character and designed to support farm workers.

"Low and behold now they want to

have a multi-faceted urban center, a city with a 500-unit hotel. That's the size of the downtown Portland Hilton. They want an industrial park... a printing press, or printing operation for the worldwide distribution of books, a university, and a population that has increased every time they've made estimates on population."

Gerhardt was asked if he thought state and local officials had been deceived. He responded diplomatically, "Their (the Rajneeshees) story has certainly changed."

A planner, who followed the city's development as closely, was less diplomatic. "They simply worked the farm line until they had a city."

ANTELOPE TRUTH?

A review of Rajneesh statements and actions in Antelope is perhaps even more enlightening than a study of their ranch's transformation from a farm to urban center.

For those who would accept what a Rajneesh spokesman tells them about anything, it would probably be wise to first consider the following:

(1) The Rajneesh have contended before the legislature and other forums that they didn't abuse Oregon's same-day registration law when they out-voted other Antelope residents in the April 15, 1982 disincorporation election.

Examine the records and you will find that on March 14, only 12 Rajneeshees were registered; on March 26, the number had grown to 27. In the 20 days prior to the election, the Rajneesh bought three more houses and moved in an additional 27 people. The last 16 of their voters were residents of Antelope for 48 hours or less prior to the election. Not one of the Rajneesh followers who voted in the election has ever now or before the election owned or even rented any property in the City of Antelope. At the time of the

election, the Rajneesh Investment Corporation owned nine of the residential dwellings in Antelope. They averaged six voters per residence while the old-timers averaged two voters.

Norma Paulus, Secretary of State, has been quoted as saying, "The only thing you needed to vote in the Antelope disincorporation election was to own a sleeping bag."

Did the Rajneesh abuse the state of Oregon's election laws? Are they being truthful when they say they had the votes to win 20 days before the election?

I wonder who your state legislator believes.

(2) In May of 1982, Antelope residents received the following assurance from Krishna Deva (David Knapp) who is currently mayor of the city of Rajneeshpuram and lobbyist before the state legislature and was then a leading spokesman for the Rajneesh in Antelope. "We would once again like to state that we have no intentions of taking over the city of Antelope..."

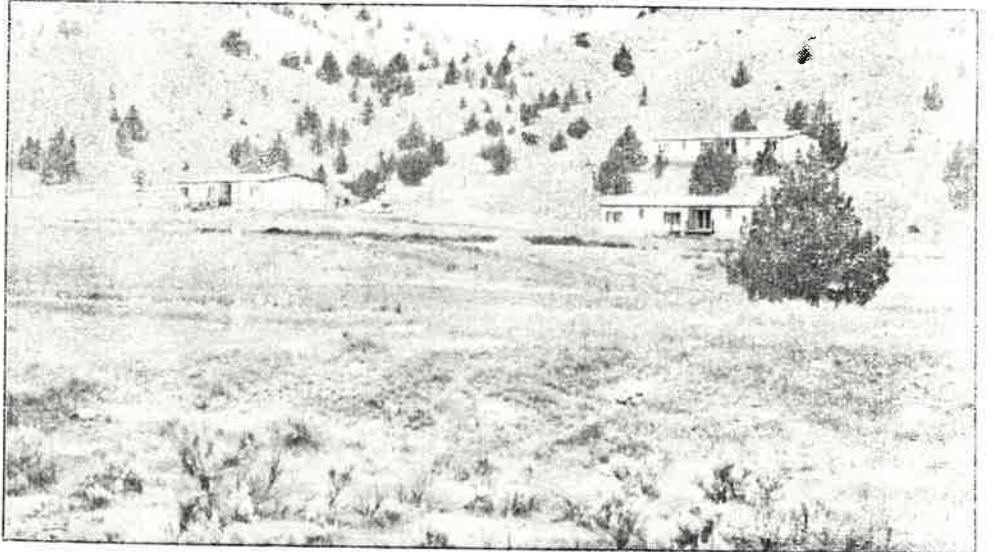
Rajneeshees currently hold 9 of 10 city offices in the city government and outnumber the previous residents of the city about 75 to 20.

(3) Also in May 1982, Deva commented on the old city council's decision to turn over the historic community church to the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon. The council feared the church would be leased or sold to the Rajneesh once the Rajneesh controlled the city council.

According to Deva, "We recognize that the council is perfectly within its legal rights to proceed with this transaction."

However, less than a year later, the current Rajneesh-dominated city council has directed the city attorney (who is also the city attorney for Rajneeshpuram) to

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A year ago, mobile homes were scattered among sagebrush with dirt road access. Back then, the Rajneesh intentions were to build a "simple farming community". Today, the intentions are for paved streets to lead to a meditation/therapy complex, school, warehouses, convention center, etc.



Greenhouses, like these built last year, are still part of the Rajneesh idea. They even grow bananas. But the scope of Rajneeshpuram has outgrown the "simple farm" concept by leaps and bounds. A 500-unit hotel is in the planning stages, along with an industrial park, factories for light manufacturing, and an adult education center.

edit/letters

Educate public; support Parks, Recreation levy

the editor,

I would like to ask the people of The Dalles a few questions. Do you want a beautiful Sorosis Park with green grass freshly mowed for picnics and ball games? Do you want long grass going to seed and eventually dying this summer for lack of water? Do you want the children of the community as well as many adults playing softball and baseball or would you rather roam the streets without supervision and activities to occupy their minds and ergys? Do you want the pool open for the summer to provide another safe outlet for children of the community and to provide a place for you to cool off when the temperature reaches 100 degrees, or do you want to force the kids to swim in the river or Horsethief Lake where there is no supervision and one broken back already? Do you square-dancers, basketball players, and senior citizens enjoy having a meeting place for your forms of recreation would you like to see the doors of the Civic Auditorium locked for the next year? How about you tennis players — would you like to see the lights off and the courts closed? And let's not forget the hundreds of kids (and adults) involved in soccer. Do you business people and merchants, motel and restaurant owners of The Dalles want added traffic of the softball and Babe Ruth tournaments and the summer Ted Baker Swim Meet or are you contented with relying on the local people for your business?

Everyone in The Dalles voting no on Park's and Recreation budget should be asking themselves these questions. These are all things we will lose should the budget fail. I spent 2½ hours at a joint meeting of the City Council and Recreation Board last evening. All the spectators I heard were in favor of the Recreation Programs and yet according to the polls are in the minority. Where were the people who objected to the budget? Why didn't they make their desires and comments known? Are these people really informed as to what the Recreation Department provides or are they just against anything that will cost money?

If the budget again fails on May 17, our manager, Mr. Del Cesar recommends that all programs be stopped immediately

in order to save enough money to water and mow the City Park and Sorosis park. When asked if grass was more important than programs he replied "yes". Is that what all you "no voters" are saying also? I happen to believe that the structured recreation programs that occupy our children's leisure time are more important. And what is more expensive in the long run? I don't believe it's repairing the added vandalism that could occur from too much leisure time.

There is a meeting of the Recreation Board Wednesday May 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the Civic Auditorium. I urge you "no voters" to be there and let your wishes be known. It is an open meeting and the Board represents all of you.

I also have a challenge for the Recreation Board and the City Council. I have suggested an idea to both groups with positive responses but no action. Since the Parks and Recreation Programs are supported by city tax dollars but enjoyed by all the residents in the area, I have urged them to initiate a user fee for non-city residents. I have spoken to several people who live outside the city limits who are willing to support the system so that their children may continue to enjoy swimming, baseball, soccer, etc. Swimming pool fees could be raised with a discount for city residents. This seems to work well in both Pendleton and John Day. Families outside the city who participate in other programs such as baseball could pay a yearly usage fee. This money could be used to help pay the cost of watering and mowing. In these days when tax dollars are harder to come by, we need some innovative methods of funding. If someone really cannot afford the fee, they could provide some volunteer man-hours as their payment. I urge board and council members to take this action soon so that the city residents will know going to the polls that they will have help in supporting Recreation programs enjoyed by all.

Lastly, I ask everyone involved in all these programs to educate the public as to just what the Recreation Programs provide for our community and urge them to vote yes on May 17.

Sincerely,
(s) Diane Keilman

Zipporah appreciates honor

the editor,

Since my reign as Northwest Cherry Sweetheart has ended, I would like to thank all of those people who donated time and effort to put on the Cherry Festival and the contest to select a new Sweetheart. I wish to thank all of the people who were so kind and encouraged me throughout the year. Knowing I had such support made my job that much easier.

I know that the 1983 Northwest Cherry Sweetheart will do a terrific job representing The Dalles area, the cherry industry, and will enjoy the opportunity to get to know the people of the community as much as I did. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent the Northwest cherry industry.

Sincerely,
Zipporah Underhill
1982 Northwest Cherry Sweetheart

Reminder coverage lauded

the editor,

I want to take this opportunity and thank you for all your efforts over the past year, especially the excellent coverage regarding the Rajneesh situation in Wasco County. Our county and community have many issues come up in the past, before the Weekly Reminder's existence, and were basically in the dark for whatever reasons. The Rajneesh issue is hot and it is important that the people be informed in our community, county and state. The old cliché "times awastin" lies here.

I also would like to comment on how the "Bill Drivers" article of 4-14-83 was

welcomed and extremely appreciated. Through articles such as this one and the Weekly Reminder to have the foresight to print it, the people will continue to be informed.

Please keep up the good work, because despite one of our county official's feelings, the people in The Dalles and elsewhere do care and are concerned about the Rajneesh issue.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,
(s) Mrs. E. Miles
1015 Murray Drive
The Dalles, OR 97058

Council to continue with suit against Phipps

Although Councilwoman Sue Woods seemed "sympathetic" to a request by Liberty Full Gospel Church Pastor Jeff Phipps, The Dalles City Council April 18 unanimously agreed to move ahead with a lawsuit seeking closure of the pastor's church.

Woods said she would like to see a compromise "sympathetic" to a request by Pastor Phipps to dismiss the lawsuit in light of petitions signed by approximately 200 area residents that feel the lawsuit is "an infringement on the first amendment of free exercise of religion" and who asked that the lawsuit be discontinued.

Councilman Merritt Probstfield questioned if Wood's suggestion would be compromising city ordinance, to which Councilman John Mabrey said the council is sworn in to uphold ordinances of the city and that methods of appealing the ordinance were not followed. Mabrey said the council had no choice but to uphold the ordinance and moved to continue with the suit, winning total council support.

The lawsuit was filed Feb. 1 against both Pastor Phipps, who purchased the church located at 1008 Union St., and John Kasnick, seller of the church, who now lives in Troutdale.

The lawsuit requested a decree restraining the use of the building as a church or as a place of public assembly until Pastor Phipps either complied to provisions of a city ordinance or secured a variance of the ordinance.

The ordinance requires places of public assembly, including churches, auditoriums, theatres and stadiums to have off-street parking spaces at the rate of one space for each four seats. The lawsuit said the church has no provision for off-street parking and that the building offers seating for more than 20 people.

Pastor Phipps filed a variance request Oct. 22 which was denied by the planning commission. The resolution of denial noted that 16 parking spaces were needed for a proposed maximum capacity of 64 seats inside the church.

At a hearing to discuss the variance request, Pastor Phipps admitted he was aware of parking requirements at the time he purchased the church. Since denial of the variance, Pastor Phipps has continued to operate the church and has publically announced intention to continue to do so.

No conclusion has yet been reached by Wasco County Circuit Court concerning the lawsuit.

Facade or fact?

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investigate possible legal actions aimed at returning the church to the city. Mayor Karuna said the church was a valuable piece of city property which could be leased or sold if the city regains control. She did not mention to whom she thought it might be leased or sold.

(4) On July 8, 1982, representatives of the Rajneesh and the previous residents of Antelope signed an agreement. The most important protection provided the non-Rajneeshes was a clause that supposedly assured them of not being taxed out of their homes to pay for future city programs initiated by the Rajneesh.

As per the agreement, the old city council then passed an ordinance assuring that such protection would be provided. Current Antelope Mayor Ma Prem Karuna, was a city council member at that time and stated, "The (Rajneesh) commune has committed itself publicly several times to paying for any improvements it wants there (in Antelope)." What has happened?

On April 5, of this year, the Rajneesh dominated City Council voted to repeal the protective ordinance. Nothing has been submitted in its place.

Also, the council has proposed a one-time tax levy that would raise property taxes in Antelope from \$10.69 per \$1000 of assessed valuation to \$28.62 per \$1000. Water rates have doubled and fire protection rates quadrupled.

If you take a tour of the Rajneesh property, stop by Antelope and ask someone how much of what Rajneesh leaders and spokesmen say you should believe.

NO COMPULSION?

I've already said that the "simple farmer" line is the most glaring example of the difference between Rajneesh facade and fact.

The coldest and cruelest example Rajneesh misrepresentation of fact, however, is their often-stated contention that nobody was forced to leave Antelope.

In a letter to the Madras Pioneer dated May 13, 1982, Krishna Deva writes, "Nobody seems to take into account that each piece of property was sold purely as a matter of free choice by the owner, mostly through brokers, under no compulsion whatsoever."

The accuracy of Deva's statement was tested against the experiences of several Antelope residents. There are endless stories of intimidation, constant picture-taking, harassment. Stories of people whose nerves have gotten so bad they tremble almost continuously, stories of

changed personalities and stories of domestic and health problems. Almost everyone who lived in the town before the Rajneesh came have had doctors treat them for stress.

The story of one lady in particular, however, gives one an impression of just how much truth their is in Deva's statement.

Other residents of Antelope had told me about this lady, about how her nerves go so bad due to Rajneesh actions that she would cry uncontrollably.

I visited her and asked if she sold as a matter of "free choice."

This is her reply:

"We had a nice little place in Antelope. It probably wasn't much by most people's standards, but it was everything to us. We had put an awful lot of work into it and we had it fixed up just the way we wanted it. We had planned to stay but we just couldn't take it any longer. The constant picture-taking and all the rest. I had lost 20 pounds and my husband had lost 30. I'd go to the table to eat and my nerves were so bad I just couldn't get anything down. I'd just get up and walk away. And the taxes we knew would be coming. It's going to be about \$30 per 1000. We're on Social Security and we just couldn't have made it. It was heartbreaking the day we left, just heartbreaking. When I go back to Antelope, I never look at the old house. It just hurts too much."

Free choice? No compulsion?

CREDIBILITY NOW?

It's hard for me to believe how the Rajneesh leaders and public relations people can say some of the things they said, but it's even harder to believe that so many people — from the retirees that go through the Rajneesh property on tour buses to the legislators who fly in on the Rajneesh jet — can't see through these people.

Admittedly, it's difficult to see through their facades. Many of them are experts in public relations and psychology and are uncanny when it comes to manipulating people.

It's taken a long time for Oregonians to start questioning these people. Although many of our county and state officials still have not, many have. And the number that has is growing rapidly.

There's another old saying, "You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time."

It's going to take a bit longer, but for the leaders, lobbyists, and public relations people of the Rajneesh, the time is about up.

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