

# Two years of politics From city council to Congress

Swami Krishna Deva describes the journey into American politics which began two years ago with the birth of the Rajneeshee commune.

I was a resident of southern California in the early 70's. Oregon seemed to me and to others to be a sort of "ecotopian" dreamland with a political environment as untainted as the state's air, land and water.

Wasn't Tom McCall of Oregon the nation's most progressive and forceful environmentalist — the guy who got headlines when he urged Californians to come visit Oregon but please don't stay?

The image of Oregon from afar as a politically enlightened state was one of the reasons Rajneeshees chose Oregon above other states as a location of our dream home. *Since that time, Tom McCall has gone to heaven — and so have any illusions we had of politics in Oregon as any more enlightened than politics in, say, Mississippi or Alabama.*

Politically enlightened? Hardly. We have heard Oregon's Governor say that newcomers who don't strike the fancy of existing residents should leave Oregon. Strange words from the son of an Arab immigrant and a far cry from Tom McCall's tongue-in-cheek jabs.

Politically enlightened? We have heard Oregon's senior U.S. Senator deny involvement in anti-Rajneeshee activities and then seen his love letters to anti-Rajneeshee activists with tips on how to harass Rajneeshees.

Politically enlightened? We have seen a well-heeled lobby use Oregon land use law as a war-toy in a thinly veiled religious crusade designed to hound us from our homes.

What a long and strange trip it's been — in such a short period of time. From City Council to County Commission to State Capital to the quarters of Congress — starting two years ago when only one Rajneeshee attended Antelope City Council meetings.

*We had hoped to remain aloof from politics when we moved here — given the sleazy business politics can be these days — but constant political attack on several fronts forced us to fight back to protect our rights and our dream of Rajneeshpuram.*

Along the way we have learned some important lessons.

We learned from the rigid Antelope City Council of two years ago why this part of the state is known to some as the "Redneck Riviera."

We also learned from our Antelope experience something far more significant: despite its flaws, the American system works.

Politics and many of its practitioners may be sleazy — but the process is pure, if not in

a positive way, at least in the negative way of preventing tyranny by a minority.

We fought the Antelope City Council in the Courts and at the ballot box, defeating an attempt to disincorporate the town — and electing a City Council which recognizes that constitutional rights of freedom belong to everyone, not just the chosen few.

*We spent countless hours with County Courts in Wasco and Jefferson Counties, because everything we have done — and I mean everything — has required approval from the two counties, as well as a host of federal, state and local regulatory agencies.*

We have been treated fairly by Wasco County in our numerous dealings with them, but we can't say the same about Jefferson County — with the exception of law enforcement officials who have been a credit to their calling.

Our political journeys led to Salem in January when we learned that several lawmakers were plotting a legislative sneak attack against us.

Unlike most lobbyists in Salem, we weren't there to seek favors or handouts, but to prevent the original Antelope attitude from infecting members of the legislature.

*It didn't, and any thoughts of bringing us to grief ended*

*when lawmakers saw for themselves that we aren't little devils with horns and tails.*

One of the highlights of our Salem presence was the visit to Rajneeshpuram of the House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee, which returned to the capital with glowing praise of what we have accomplished.

In short order, Ma Anand Sheela, was invited to give the traditional opening prayer in both the House and the Senate. The Rajneeshee Country Band performed at the legislators' monthly "payday party" for the legislators and capital staff, and a number of other legislators and staff eagerly visited the ranch.

As we leave Salem along with everyone else at the close of the second longest session in State history, we find our attention directed towards Washington D.C., to guarantee the key members of Congress are fully informed about the vendetta being waged against us by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

As much political ground as we have covered within only two years, we don't intend to slow down in the future. We will continue to fully participate in the process and prove that the ideals of democracy, individual liberty and religious freedom on which America was founded still hold good today.

From RAJNESH TIMES, Friday, July 15, 1983  
Captioned: "Two years of politics".....

HEADLINE: (pp: 1) LCDC adopts anti-Rajneeshee rule on new cities.....

Since muddy-people classify our Governor and the Jefferson County Court, as being similarly motivated — it would seem fitting that an impending journey to Sheela-land should become a joint venture.

This was suggested, some days ago, by one Commissioner, later agreed to by the full Court and David Green is impressed with the idea, as well.

Jefferson Counties hard-nosed attitude, from the onset, has been very much along guidelines as are now being presented by the LCDC. Had Wasco County been similarly motivated, this difficult situation could have been handled differently; the river people would have been better orientated to facts of rural life style, saving gullible contributors millions of bucks.

An organized initiative, by the above foursome, can lead highly disturbed Rajneeshees out of a state of reckless behavior — to a realization of the constant turmoil, which will not fade away.

Would be, empire builders need a firm psychological foundation to build on, — they cannot fabricate a mysticism that will meld with a community of independent thought.