

Gerry Thompson

August 18, 1983

Bob Oliver

Your Meeting with Rajneesh

Betty Maudlin gave me a memorandum containing 31 questions presented to you by an anti-Rajneesh group. Some of these have to be confirmed with state agencies which are involved. Some, on the other hand, can be answered quickly.

"6. Abuse of children. Children led into masturbation and sex with adults at 13." Did members of this group actually see this happening? Who told them it was happening? Do they have names or descriptions of people who might have perpetrated these alleged crimes? Are they prepared to sign sworn complaints against persons alleged to have committed these crimes, knowing the penalties for defamation and malicious prosecution?

"9. How Can Bhagwan stay in this country when he came in with a 'cloud over his head', suspected of income tax evasion, misuse of charity?" The State of Oregon does not regulate matters pertaining to immigration, and this question ought to be addressed to federal authorities. Do the folks in Central Oregon want the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization to apply the same, strict standards to all aliens in that area (including Mexican farmworkers) as they are asking be applied to the Bhagwan and his followers?

"18. We understand that they have posted people in Shaniko and Fossil and they monitor everything and everybody moving in the area and into Antelope." There is absolutely nothing illegal about this. I can post spies on all roads into Salem and monitor traffic, if I desire. It is only if I try to interfere with the flow of traffic, or make illegal use of this information, that I will get in trouble.

"20. (in part) Is it legal for them to take everybody's picture on the county roads? They take pictures of everybody that attends their city council, yet they tell people they can't take pictures." I can legally take pictures of anyone I desire. My use of these pictures, so far as publishing them, may be subject to certain legal restrictions. What happens within a city council chamber is subject to the rules of the council, and it can allow anyone to take pictures if it pleases. The questioners did not make it clear, in saying "They tell people they can't take pictures," where and on what occasions this prohibition applies. Courts routinely apply restrictions on photography during trials by other than official photographers.

Gerry Thompson
August 18, 1983
Page 2

"22. There have been rumors you can get paid to get married to those who want permanent status in this country." These rumors may be true, but they cannot be verified unless the complainants present specific information -- who, when, and where. This practice has happened on many occasions in other contexts. It is hard to investigate rumors, however.

"26. Heard that Bhagwan came here on a visa for his health. His health has improved, but he has found our country so good he wants permanent residence. Now he contends he is a teacher with a religious organization. What does he teach and what does his religious organization stand for? Is he really going to teach in Fall at the University? How can he get into federal funded college to teach?" Again, most of these matters relate to immigration, which is under the jurisdiction of federal authorities. It is not for this office to explain the Bhagwan's teachings, and what his religious organization stands for -- any more than we should try to explain what Presbyterians, Mormons or Jews teach and stand for. Those who are interested could read the Bhagwan's writings, or attend lectures of his followers. The State System of Higher Education has no plans to offer a teaching position to the Bhagwan. They cannot speak for private institutions. As to the federal funding issue, the questioners do not make it clear why the Bhagwan should be disqualified from teaching at a facility which chose to hire him, because that institution might be in receipt of federal aid.

"27. (in part) Does everybody know the property they own or buy is owned by an international foundation in England? . . . We were told by a tour guide they pay taxes on tapes and books that are sold. How do we know it is all reported?" There are various rumors circulating about the ultimate control over the Rajneesh Foundation -- that it is corporately controlled in England, Switzerland, India, or even the Soviet Union. As is the case with most large businesses, corporate control is complex and hard to trace. We do not know that the Rajneesh report all their income on tapes and books for tax purposes, any more than we know that other businesses report their income correctly. The Oregonian last Sunday reported on the prevalence of under reporting by small businesses throughout the state. All the Internal Revenue Service, and our Department of Revenue, can do, is try to catch taxpayers when they cheat.

"29. We have heard rumors that \$1/2 million was confiscated from followers that were trying to smuggle into India." This rumor is obscure, and it is difficult to know what connection it has with Oregon's problems involving the group. Who confiscated the money? Under what authority? Were the culprits apprehended and punished, or are they repeating their crimes in Oregon? These rumors need amplification before their relevance can be determined or they can be investigated.

Gerry Thompson
August 18, 1983
Page 3

"30. Applied for 1984 festival permit. How can they do this when the city is not legal. How do they know they will be there." The complainants struck out completely on this one. ORS 433.735 to 433.770 regulates issuance of permits for outdoor mass-gatherings -- this is the law under which they Rajneesh obtained permits in 1982 and 1983. "Any person" may apply for such a permit as an organizer. There is no requirement it be a city (legal or otherwise). One might say that nobody who applies for a permit to hold an outdoor mass gathering ever knows, with certainty, what is going to happen tomorrow.

I understand the contact person for the group was Donna Quick. I was given her name about two weeks ago, and was asked to return her call. I tried several times, but there was no response at her number. This may explain the comment of the group that they "couldn't understand why it was so hard to get a meeting and to get in touch with this office again."

Personally, I am more disgusted every day with the flaunting and taunting attitude of the Rajneesh -- as manifested by their nudity ordinance, their gay rights ordinance, and most recently the decision to hold an outdoor "fair" next week on the main street of Antelope. I have mixed feelings about activists who oppose them, such as the group with whom you met on August 12. I understand and share their concerns. On the other hand, they still are failing to come forward with specific evidence -- or even allegations -- of wrongdoing. What they have done is ask us to investigate rumors, questions, suppositions, etc. Some require inquiry of the Department of Revenue, the State Police, the Department of Education, the Bureau of Labor and Industries, the Department of Water Resources, the Health Division, the State Aeronautics Division, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Adult and Family Services Division, the Secretary of State, and the Fire Marshal (e.g., "25. Are they in compliance with fire laws?") I find myself reluctantly in agreement with the Rajneesh spokesperson who is said to have commented, after the meeting, "By firing at everything in sight, they hope to hit something."

Nevertheless, in all seriousness, I suspect it is a good idea for us to take an inventory of all state agencies enumerated above, to make sure we really are not overlooking something which is being done in contravention of state law. I will let you know as soon as I get the returns from these agencies -- probably in a week or 10 days.