

Office of the Governor State of Oregon



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State Capitol
Salem, Oregon
378-3121

October 16, 1984

There have been rumors for some time regarding the Rajneesh, accelerated by recent events. The attached does not include all the past and present rumors, but contains the most prevalent or repeated ones. To the best of our knowledge the answers given are correct at the time of the release. This is a one-time document; however, if verbal updates or corrections are necessary, we will see that they are forthcoming at appropriate times.

RAJNEESH

PREFACE

July 1981 the Chidvillas Rajneesh Meditation Center, incorporated in New Jersey in 1977 as a religious tax exempt organization, purchased the Big Muddy Ranch in Central Oregon for reported 6-7 million dollars. The ranch, 64,229 acres of which 50,000 acres lies in Jefferson County and 14,229 in Wasco County, was immediately occupied by about 50 members of the organization and renamed Rajneeshpuram. An additional 17,000 acres of BLM is under lease.

Shortly thereafter the organization purchased property and businesses in the small nearby city of Antelope, population 40. Residents of Antelope attempted in April 1982 to disincorporate the city but failed when the Rajneesh met voter requirements with sufficient numbers to retain the city.

July 1982 and each successive July Rajneeshpuram has held a world-wide Festival at the ranch. The 1982 Festival attracted approximately 5,000 persons and grossed a reported 4 million dollars; the 1984 Festival attracted approximately 15,000 people and grossed an estimated 12 million dollars.

Rajneeshpuram has an established Peace Force consisting of 10 Board of Police Standards and Training certified officers and in July 1984 reported 39 reserves.

The Rajneesh Council at Antelope has contracted with Rajneeshpuram for police services to provide 24-hour coverage. Antelope's population at present is approximately 80 Rajneesh and 13 non-Rajneesh. Rajneesh has expanded their business holdings.

Early September 1984 the Rajneesh announced a new program of importing "street people" from several major cities, primarily the east coast, to the ranch to train them in a productive trade. Ground construction is underway in Antelope, now renamed Rajneesh, and a modular "man camp" has been purchased for erection. Reportedly approximately 1,400 "street people" will be housed in Antelope when facilities are completed.

ELECTIONS

Question: What is being done about the possible election fraud?

Answer: Secretary of State Norma Paulus, with the Governor's cooperation, has developed a system of monitoring the voter registration in Wasco County to ensure that only qualified individuals will be eligible to vote in that county. Details of that system were announced by Mrs. Paulus on October 12, 1984.

Question: When a Rajneeshee uses two different names, what is to prevent getting two votes in any election?

Answer: It is possible for anyone to register in two places under two names. However, it is against the law and subject to penalties.

IMMIGRATIONS

Question: Why is Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh being allowed to remain in this country and what is the Governor doing about it?

Answer: Matters of immigration and naturalization are the exclusive domain of the federal government. There is no legal way the Governor can control the actions or in fact be consulted on his views with respect to pending immigration cases. Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is currently in the U.S. under a tourist visa. He has applied for a permanent resident status as a religious leader. The matter is currently under investigation by the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service.

LAND USE

Question: Is it true the Rajneeshees are purchasing other property in Oregon?

Answer: Owners of real property are not required to report offers to buy their property and there is no systematic way we can determine whether such efforts are being made. State government cannot legally forbid the owner of property from selling it to whomever he or she chooses.

Question: Are the Rajneeshees violating state land use laws?

Answer: There are a variety of land use disputes involving Rajneeshpuram. The disputes are all in the courts at the present time.

Question: Why is it taking so long to settle the matters involving land use?

Answer: Land use laws have been written with the objective of protecting all legitimate interests of landowners and with many safeguards to protect property rights. LCDC and the courts must treat the Rajneeshees as they would any other citizen owning land who is involved in a dispute over matters of planning. Much of the litigation on the land use plan involves a determination of the city's status now at issue in a case brought by the Attorney General and discussed under state/city affairs.

Following is a brief summary of the land use cases involving Rajneeshpuram:

1. 1000 Friends v. Wasco County (1984):

Invalidates incorporation decision made by Wasco County. Petition for Supreme Court review pending. The court has not yet decided whether it will take the case.

2. Perkins v. Rajneeshpuram (June 27, 1984):

Invalidates annexation to Rajneeshpuram based on Wasco County III. Motion to reconsider now pending before Appeals Court.

3. McKnight v. LCDC (September 5, 1984):

Dismisses suit which challenged Commission's temporary rule on the application of the goals to incorporation because of adoption of permanent rule.

4. Swami Krishna Deva v. LCDC:

Challenged LCDC temporary rule as in McKnight. Motion to dismiss has been filed because of decision in McKnight.

5. City of Rajneeshpuram v. LCDC and McKnight v. LCDC:

Both cases challenge LCDC's permanent rule on the application of the Goals to incorporation. On hold pending final Supreme Court decision on Wasco County III.

6. City of Rajneeshpuram v. LCDC and 1000 Friends of Oregon v. LCDC:

Both cases challenge LCDC's Continuance Order issued to Rajneeshpuram. Briefs have just been filed (10-3-84).

CIRCUIT COURT

7. McGreer v. LCDC:

Challenges LCDC's refusal to issue an Enforcement Order for Rajneeshpuram. Case pending.

LAND USE BOARD OF APPEALS (LUBA)

8. Rajneeshpuram; Rajneesh Medical Corp; Rajneesh Travel Corp. and Ma Anand Sagon et al v. Wasco County:

These four cases challenge amendments to Wasco County's plan which affect the City of Rajneeshpuram. Oral argument is scheduled before LUBA on October 11, 1984.

TAXES

Question: Do the Rajneeshees pay property taxes?

Answer: The Rajneeshees thus far have been subject to property taxes on all they own and they are current in paying them. The Rajneeshees are seeking a tax exemption limited to their house of worship which has been denied by Wasco County and is on appeal to the Department of Revenue. They are currently paying property taxes in Wasco and Jefferson and Multnomah Counties.

Question: Can a Rajneeshee who receives no monetary reimbursement for work avoid paying any state income tax?

Answer: There is no law which prohibits a person from working for nothing if he or she chooses. However, the Rajneeshees must pay corporate or income taxes on any non-religious income such as the operation of a hotel or tourist shop. The same rules apply with respect to any other religious facility.

Question: Do the Rajneeshees pay income tax like other Oregonians?

Answer: If a Rajneeshee receives a salary, then he or she is subject to income tax like any other Oregonian. However, state laws do not allow the state Department of Revenue to make public the income tax records of Oregonians as a protection to all citizens.

Question: Are taxes on the private corporation receipts such as tapes and books all reported?

Answer: Like all nonprofit corporations, the enterprises run by the Rajneeshees are subject to Department of Revenue audit to ensure compliance with the law.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Question: Has there been any change in crime rate since the "street people" have been leaving Rajneeshpuram?

Answer: Only minor crimes have been reported such as two windows broken and failure to pay for a meal in a restaurant. State police patrols working in cooperation with local law enforcement agencies have been increased to reassure the citizens that law and order will be maintained.

Question: Has hunting near Rajneeshpuram caused problems?

Answer: No. There was one minor incident involving a Rajneesh helicopter which landed near a hunter, causing some rumors that the Rajneeshees were harassing deer on BLM land.

Question: Are the Rajneeshees armed and is that legal?

Answer: It has been confirmed that there are some semiautomatic weapons in addition to revolvers worn by peace force members and security personnel. The possession of firearms is not illegal in Oregon. Rumor that three helicopters patrol Rajneeshpuram with mounted machine guns is false. They have one small helicopter not suitable for a mounted machine gun.

Question: Is it true Rajneeshpuram is an armed camp likened to a military installation?

Answer: State Police and military officials, during recent visits to the ranch, have not seen visible evidence which would indicate the city is an "armed camp."

Question: Is it legal for armed guards to carry semiautomatic weapons while traveling with the Bhagwan.

Answer: Oregon residents generally are guaranteed the right to bear arms openly, including semiautomatic weapons. It is illegal to carry concealed weapons without a specific permit.

STATE/CITY AFFAIRS

In October 1983 Governor Atiyeh authorized the Attorney General to bring a lawsuit challenging the existence of Rajneeshpuram as a city. The case was transferred from state to federal court. There have been numerous hearings during recent months on this case. The state's position is that Rajneeshpuram is not legally a city because that would violate the constitutional separation of church and state. Hearings continue in court at this time.

Question: Is Rajneeshpuram receiving any state funds such as liquor, highway fund, fuel taxes?

Answer: No. As of last year all state revenue sharing for cities has been cut off to Rajneeshpuram and is in escrow pending a decision on the case.

STREET PEOPLE

Question: Who are the "street people"?

Answer: Mostly homeless people recruited from major U.S. cities.

Question: Why are the "street people" being brought to Oregon?

Answer: The Rajneeshees have announced a program which they describe as humanitarian to provide a home for the homeless. Interviews with departing "street people" have indicated that there has been some effort to encourage the recruits to vote in the November 6 election. The election and registration process is being monitored closely by the Secretary of State with the cooperation of the Governor.

Question: How many "street people" will be brought to Oregon?

Answer: So far the street people number in excess of 2,000 with about 15 percent attrition rate. Officials at Rajneeshpuram have indicated that enrollment in their "humanitarian program" was suspended October 12, 1984.

Question: Are "street people" being given return tickets if they are asked to leave or want to return to the cities from which they came?

Answer: There is no real definitive answer to this question. Rajneeshpuram officials have said that those who were promised a ticket for return will be provided transportation to their original city. Those who were not recruited on that basis will be given transportation to the nearest city of their choice, i.e., Madras, The Dalles or Portland. In some instances interviews of "street people" would indicate otherwise.

Question: Are "street people" being transported to other areas in Oregon?

Answer: As of this date Oregon State Police have not heard from any city other than Portland, Madras or The Dalles. The known ones in Madras have now either left the area or are being provided for. None are known to remain in The Dalles. Agencies in Portland are attempting to make provisions for "street people" in the area.

Question: Suppose "hundreds of street people" are delivered to communities without tickets home. What will the state do?

Answer: A plan has been and is in effect. Volunteer efforts are currently underway in the local area and in Portland to be certain the provisions are made should this occur. Governor Atiyeh has also taken steps to be certain both public and private assistance is available. A recent survey of some of those recruited indicate that they do not qualify for state welfare. Governor Atiyeh has appealed to the Rajneeshees to make good their statements of humanitarian intentions by not abandoning those whom they find unsuitable.

Question: Is it true most of these street people have criminal records?

Answer: Unless a person is apprehended for an offense, there is no way to require identification so a record, if any, can be obtained. Some of those who have been arrested for minor offenses do have criminal records.

Question: How can these street people be eligible to vote?

Answer: The Secretary of State, the county clerks and the Attorney General are clarifying legal requirements which determine whether a person is a resident of Oregon and therefore eligible to vote. These guidelines will apply to all people who seek to register to vote in the coming election.

TAKEOVER/CONTROL

Question: The Rajneeshees have made statements that they will take over Wasco County and the State of Oregon. Is that possible?

Answer: Since the Rajneeshees moved to Oregon in 1981, they have increased their population at the ranch. Currently they control the local school board and the Rajneesh City Council, having been elected to those respective boards. It is hard to conceive that 5-7,000 Rajneeshees can take over a state of 2.6 million.

Question: Why didn't the state prevent the takeover by the Rajneeshees of the city of Antelope?

Answer: The Rajneeshees were able to garner the majority of votes in elections which were legally held. The state does not have legal authority to overturn the outcome of an election.

WELFARE

Question: Are children being abused at Rajneeshpuram?

Answer: Complaints and allegations are all non-specific. To date no cases have been reported to CSD or police agencies and brought forward for investigation.

Question: Is any resident of the Rajneeshpuram receiving welfare, ADC, food stamps or social security benefits?

Answer: Social security benefits are administered by the federal government and under the law such information is confidential. To the best of our knowledge the Adult and Family Services Division which administer welfare, ADC and food stamps has no record of any Rajneeshee receiving benefits from the agency. However, there is one physically disabled person on welfare rolls in Multnomah County who recently moved to Rajneeshpuram. This person's eligibility is under review. AFS has been told by Social Security that 65 persons living on the ranch have asked that their federal social security checks be changed from former addresses to the ranch. However, this is a matter for the federal government to resolve.

Question: Is it legal for Rajneeshees to use two different names which would impede the investigation of welfare fraud, expired visas, etc.?

Answer: State and federal agencies are accustomed to checking name changes which often occur through marriage, divorce, adoption, etc. No other state human service agency reports any requests for aid from persons known to be Rajneeshees. However, it is illegal for a state agency to ask about a person's religion when he or she is seeking assistance.

OTHER

Question: What is Governor Atiyeh doing about the Rajneesh?

Answer: Everything legally possible is being done to ensure the peace and public safety of all Oregonians. That includes efforts by the Secretary of State who is working very hard to make sure the election process continues its integrity, the Attorney General, on close questions of law; and the State Police in communication with all law enforcement agencies on any contingencies that may arise from illegal actions by anyone. All Oregonians should be ensured their rights and protected; and the Governor will do everthing within his power to make sure that takes place.