

## Rajneeshees have a PR problem

Ever since the Rajneeshees put down roots in the Central Oregon town of Antelope in 1982, controversy has reigned. Antelope residents have accused the disciples of Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneeh of taking over their town and local government. The Rajneeshees have done just that.

By 1983 the Rajneeshees voted themselves into nine of 10 elected positions in the town. They split the school district, changed the names of streets, and established new laws, such as the one permitting nudity in the city park. For a short time they even changed the name of the city dump to the Adolf Hitler Landfill and Recycling Center to honor what they perceived as Hitler's leadership qualities despite his poor politics. The city dump is no longer named after Hitler because too many people found it in bad taste.

Despite this concession, the Rajneeshees carried their dreams one step further last week by changing the name of Antelope to Rajneesh. Are they suffering from an identity crisis? Apparently it isn't enough for them to always dress in red, to wear the guru's picture around their necks as they all do and to live in the city of Rajneeshpuram, now just down the road from the new town of Rajneesh.

It would be unfair, however, to hold the Rajneeshees to a different religious yardstick. After all, the Catholics did a similar thing in naming the towns and cities of California after their favorite saints.

While the Rajneeshees may get carried away with changing names, such behavior is relatively harmless. The real issue concerning the Rajneeshees — whether or not they should be pressured into leaving Oregon as some residents of this state would like — is what they have done here.

It's obvious that the Rajneeshees suffer from incredibly poor public relations. The guru's personal secretary, Ma Anand Sheela, said state Rep. Wayne Fawbush "is full of shit," on ABC's Nightline, and she has referred to Antelope residents as "stupid" and "bigoted."

Despite this, the Rajneeshees have done good. They turned an old sheep ranch, now their commune, into a thriving center for alternative energy production. They have been experimenting with low-cost appropriate technology projects, alternative housing designs and small-scale agricultural development. The Rajneesh commune could become a successful new-age headquarters for advances in community living based upon developing alternative technologies on a small scale. These are and can continue to be very positive contributions to people in Oregon and throughout the country who seek an alternative lifestyle in community living.

The Rajneeshees can offer a lot that is positive to society if they get their social act together and learn how to get along with people instead of insulting them. By having a "holier than thou" attitude and by bringing in outsiders to vote for their causes as they have been accused of, the Rajneeshees are defeating their own goal: to better society by being a positive and creative group of people.

## For Reagan campaign debates are an obstacle

In less than two weeks the American public will have a chance to see Pres. Ronald Reagan and Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale confront each other on the debate platform. Or will they?

The key word is "confront." Although Mondale requested six debates to thoroughly cover the issues, Reagan would only agree to two. Furthermore, when Mondale asked that he and Reagan be allowed to question each other directly with only a moderator present, the Reagan camp refused. Instead, they insisted that four journalists question the candidates separately while allowing Reagan and Mondale to make opening and closing statements.

Why all the conditions and why not six debates instead of two? It appears once again that the Reagan camp wants to protect their leader as much as possible from any open challenges to his understanding of foreign and domestic issues. Six debates would increase the likelihood of Reagan making more of the outrageous claims and misstatements he already is famous for.

The public could learn a lot about the candidates by hearing them ask questions as well as answer them. It would be nice to see Reagan without a script in his hands.

Still, two debates are better than none. Reagan has shown about as much enthusiasm for debates as he does for news conferences. Since he has only given five full-scale, half-hour news conferences so far this year, Americans should consider themselves lucky to have Reagan agree to two debates. Like most actors, he doesn't like to go on stage without his lines memorized.



"WE ARE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE HERE; IT'S THE LOCAL BIGOTS AND FASCIST POLITICIANS THAT ARE THE PROBLEM."

## letters

### Distortions

Periodically the local reactionaries indulge themselves in a frenzied condemnation of "misinformation" on national defense issues, which is usually attributed to machinations of the KGB. However Eugene has its own masters of misinformation. They're called the Defense Education Committee.

At a meeting of the Rubicon Society on Aug. 16 the guest speaker was one Bob Bennet, a member of this committee whose avowed aim is to educate the public on the need for a strong defense. Having some interest in these issues I went to the presentation in hope of learning something new.

However, I was disappointed. Instead of being given an unbiased appraisal of the balance of forces I was subjected to one of the dreariest collection of half-truths, falsehoods, and distortions it's been my misfortune to listen to in years. The construction of military facilities in Nicaragua was dealt on at excruciating length while no mention was made of U.S. construction efforts in places such as Puerto Lempira, San Lorenzo, Trujillo, or Aguacate in Honduras. The Soviet

numerical lead in submarines was noted but the superior U.S. anti-submarine warfare capabilities were ignored. So on and so forth. When I pointed out the errors in his analysis Bennet's only response was the hoary excuse that he couldn't talk about it because it was classified.

I don't mind another shrill group of recalcitrant right-wingers banding together to bamboozle the public. It's their constitutional right, which I served four years active duty in the U.S. Navy to defend. But I do wish they were honest enough to label it for what it is, single issue advocacy, rather than hide behind the false label of "education." It's already been abused enough.

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### A dying breed

"Campuses Launch Anti-Reagan Campaign," was the title of an article published by the Registrar-Guard 9/18/84. This NGO group called "Change in 84," started by Professor Goldrich, doesn't represent a majority of the students on the campuses throughout the state of Oregon. The problem with

the professor is that he is still living in the radical 60's.

When Professor Goldrich states, "there is enormous awareness on campuses of the unjustified nature of (Reagan)," he seems to be void of the political realities of the 80's. This is shocking given the fact that he is a professor of political science.

The climate on the U of O campus has changed in the last few years. The students here are more conservative. There is a new alternative student paper with a conservative point of view, The Oregon Commentator. Plus, many pro-Reagan clubs have emerged on campus. The U of O is not representative of most college campuses, however, it is more liberal.

President Reagan's strongest base of support is in the colleges, ages 18 to 24. These students no longer accept the tried and failed policies of the radical 60's, which professor Goldrich represents. I suggest that when classes start, the professor look at his students. He may realize that he is part of a dying breed, the liberal radicals of the 60's.

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