

## **THE CARLSON CHRONICLE**

### **Redoubt Redux**

The anniversary passed largely unnoticed last week, but it is part of the context which one must weigh in order to understand the “Redoubt Movement” taking place in north Idaho today as well as isolated and sparsely settled parts of Montana and Wyoming.

Inspired by a manifesto written (2011) and posted on his website (survivalblog.com) by survivalist author James Wesley, Rawls, the document urged folks worried about the next financial crash or Armageddon to move to the sparsely settled areas of the upper mountain west.

Rawls pointed out that these areas would be good places to live by those who felt oppressed by exploding government regulations and a federal government over reaching in people’s lives. He noted places like north Idaho had a justifiable reputation for being libertarian and a terrain that could more easily be defended. Thus, he urged folks to relocate where their numbers might be few but their unity could disproportionately influence their political milieu.

With Rawls emphasizing little interference in their private life and the access to nearby U.S. Forest Service lands for hunting, fishing, berry-picking and a real estate agent aggressively marketing all this, Rawls supporters claim thousands of folks have migrated here.

Local officials in Bonner and Boundary counties dispute those claims, but the truth is no one really knows. What is known is the “redoubters” are participating in local politics. State Reps. Heather Scott and Sage Dixon, with “redoubter” support, have captured two of the three legislative district one seats. They have failed, however, to knock off Senator Shawn Keough, current co-chair of the powerful Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee.

Critics see similarities between the “Redoubt” movement and the old *posse comitatus* in its emphasis on the sacred status of the Constitution and the supremacy of a county sheriff as the top law enforcement officer. Rawls has been careful to avoid anything close to appearing to be a

racist. To the contrary, all are welcomed, he says, who share a desire for less government.

The contextual aspect mentioned earlier with regard to an anniversary still lingers in the minds of many Idahoans. August 21<sup>st</sup> was the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the siege at Ruby Ridge in which federal agents were responsible for killing Randy Weaver's wife, Vicki, and one of their children. Anyone who reads former *Spokesman-Review* reporter Jess Walters' excellent book on the siege comes away convinced that the federal government engaged in pure entrapment.

A brilliant Wyoming defense attorney, "Gunning for Justice" Gerry Spence, proceeded to tear apart the government's case and a Boise jury acquitted Randy Weaver of all charges after 19 days of deliberation.

The message many took away from Ruby Ridge is that the federal government can literally kill one with impunity. However, if the time comes, Rawls' message to redoubters is also one of possible murder, though he would call it self-defense. What they preach is be ready to shoot to kill all the panic-driven folks who will pore out of cities in search of sustenance.

Seeing Idaho as a haven for anti-government, take the law into your own hands types is not the image Idaho wants to convey. It can have a real downer impact on a local economy, especially if some national organization serves notice of a boycott. Losses could be in the millions.

The legitimate concern that Idaho's elected officials should be sounding alarm bells about is the tendency of national media to want to characterize the Redoubt movement as the reincarnation of the Richard Butler/Neo-nazis plague that afflicted Idaho's image world-wide for years.

Jame Wesley, Rawls and the redoubters are certainly hard right libertarian conservatives who can intimidate simply by showing up at meetings wearing their pistols whether there is an open-carry law or not. There is no evidence, however, that they espouse the hate-filled, white supremacist racist views of Butler. National and even international media are already monitoring and watching perhaps hoping they are.

The August 6<sup>th</sup> *Economist* magazine had a long some would say sympathetic article extolling the desire for less government regulations and more individual freedom. The author errs though in repeating the belief that thousands have already moved here. He also seemed to think people can still homestead in the west. In addition, two months ago the *Washington Post* sent one of its Pulitzer prize-winning reporters, Kevin Sullivan, to northern Idaho to explore the possible story. (Editor's note: Sullivan's article appeared in the August 28<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Post*, two days after this column was written and distributed.)

An obvious question is what's the difference between the Butler era and the Rawls era? The answer is that though it took some time to get it together, local leaders in Coeur d'Alene did unite with the state's political leadership to denounce the racist, hate filled language of the neo-Nazi's.

Governors Andrus, Batt and Kempthorne all worked with local leaders like Tony Stewart, Father Bill Wassmuth and Marshall Mend to denounce Butler and company. In other words there was real political leadership both at the local and state level.

One has yet to hear a peep from Governor Otter, or Senators Risch and Crapo, or Congressman Raul Labrador, speaking out that even the "redoubt movement," possibly a more benign *posse comitatus* group, is not reflective of Idaho, its citizens and its collective values.