

Redoubters doubt

Randy Stapilus/Ridenbaugh Press

In this time of Trump, let's review the Redoubt.

Idahoans have had an awareness of this sort-of phenomenon for some time, especially but not exclusively those in the north. It is listed in Wikipedia, where the descriptive article about it begins, "The American Redoubt is a political migration movement first proposed in 2011 by best-selling survivalist novelist and blogger James Wesley Rawles which designates three states in the northwestern United States (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming), and adjoining portions of two other states (eastern Oregon, and eastern Washington) as a safe haven for conservative, libertarian-leaning Christians and Jews."

It isn't just a call from a messiah, though. An article about the Redoubt from last May in the Spokane Spokesman-Review was headlined, "Extreme right invites like-minded to region."

The area overall is said to have attracted thousands of people, though no one knows for sure how many.

No one knows for sure what its political impact may be, either.

It sounds like the kind of movement that might find common cause with the Donald Trump campaign, and maybe many of its people do. That too is hard to know, because so many of them are determinedly off the grid, unallied with large organizations, even those as disorganized as the Trump campaign.

But if so, it does not seem to be taking over. In Idaho, the core of the Redoubt area is in the Panhandle, and in the May primary election Texas Senator Ted Cruz won all of the Panhandle except for Shoshone County (a relatively lightly-populated area); Trump won mainly in the areas that were more remote still, outside the areas usually classed as the Redoubt.

A late August article in the Washington Post on the Redoubt, a well-crafted piece focusing on Idaho, missed most of the recent electoral context, which extended beyond the presidential level.

An opinion piece on the Spokesman-Review website on September 1 noted, "reasonable Republicans largely prevailed during the Idaho primary in May. Kootenai County Sheriff Ben Wolfinger easily beat his 'constitutionalist' sheriff opponent. Jim Chmelik, one of the region's leading proponents for public land takeovers, lost his bid for re-election as Idaho County commissioner. Four far-right incumbent legislators in North Idaho were defeated. So, in the short

term, it would appear as if the majority of Idahoans haven't bought into the fear-based agenda of the extreme right. They don't envision teeming hordes streaming out of the Lilac City.”

I don't mean here to conflate the Redoubters of today with the Aryan Nations Neo-Nazi gaggle of yesteryear – gone now, happily, for more than a decade – except for this: The actual numerical influence of both probably has been and now is being overstated. Back in the Aryans' day, some member of that tribe (on one occasion, head honcho Richard Butler himself) would run for a local office, and invariably collect no more than a handful of votes, losing in an overwhelming rout. That part of the Aryan story didn't often get as much play as their parades or other activities that seemed to puff up their visibility and seeming size and influence.

That could change with the Redoubters. In theory, it could affect this next election. But I'll believe it when I see it.

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