

Troops Erect Barbed Wire At Agassiz



Photograph of RCMP members monitoring the Doukhobor convey to Agassiz, BC (Source of photo Columbian Newspaper).

Prison preparing for Son 'invasion' – (Columbian Newspaper – 1962) A squadron of 140 permanent force troops moved into Agassiz Friday night to build a barbed wire 'no man's land' around the federal prison, the target of trekking Freedomite Doukhobors from the Kootenays.

The precautionary move to bolster the protection around the prison compound was ordered Friday by the federal justice department. At the same time civic officials in Ken municipality – including both Agassiz and Harrison Hot Springs – indicated that 24-hour guards probably would be posted on all public buildings and schools in the area.

Officials Meet

The posting of guards was proposed at a meeting at Harrison Hot Springs Friday between municipal officials, Attorney General Bonner and Inspector S.E. Raybone, officer commanding RCMP Chilliwack detachment.

Ken Municipal Council earlier told the Freedomites they were not welcome in Agassiz because of 'their previous record of arson, bombing and nude demonstrations.'

But Friday, as the Freedomite trekkers started on the last 300-mile leg of their journey to the special Agassiz prison where 67 Freedomites are serving terms, the situation was becoming more tense.

Supplies Of Wine

The army squad from the 3rd Field Squadron Royal Canadian Engineers was ordered out from Camp Chilliwack with supplies of barbed wire. They were under the command of Major R.A. McDermott.

The soldiers worked through the night to build the new barbed-wire protection. The prison compounds already are surrounded by an inner cable wire fence 12 feet high and a second outer fence 14 feet high. The troops planned to withdraw after stringing the wire.

In Ottawa, Deputy Penitentiaries Commissioner J.R. Stone repeated that Freedomite prisoners would not be moved from Agassiz, despite the threats of some of the marchers that they would go in if the prisoners did not come out.

Justice Minister Fleming said the Freedomite marchers 'will not be permitted' to attack the penitentiary. He did not elaborate.

Officials in Kent, a municipality of 2,300 persons, said no detailed plans on security guards have been drawn up. The council will have to work this out.

It is believed that guards probably will be detailed for works department buildings, the buildings at the agriculture grounds and on equipment at gravel pits. The school board will guard all schools.

No guards are expected at the municipal hall as the RCMP office is housed in the building.

After the meeting, the attorney-general and Inspector Raybone inspected the prison area, 4 1/4 miles west of Agassiz.

Mr. Bonner said no immediate action is planned against the trekkers, 'While the emolument remains lawful, it can't be made the subject of any official actions, he said.

Sons Reach New Camp At Bromley

PRINCETON (Columbian Newspaper 1962) – An advance party of 169 Sons of Freedom Doukhobors made camp in Bromley government campsite near here Friday, just 125 miles from their goal at Agassiz Mountain Prison.

The Freedomites made the trip from their base camp at Grand Forks in 38 cars.

Police say every vehicle was checked for firearms and explosives, and they have the names of every person who left Bill Podovennikoff's farm where the group has camped since last Friday.

The U.S. border crossing, only two miles from the farm, was also alerted but no Freedomites crossed there. Police say the advance party consisted of 95 men, 69 women and five teenagers.

The remaining 200 odd Freedomites still at Grand Forks camp consist of mothers and children under 15.

Freedomites estimate it will be nine or 10 days before the entire group reaches the Agassiz Mountain Prison. 'Only God knows what we will do when we reach the prison but it is the end of the line for us,' said Marie Shlakoff, a Freedomite spokesman.

Police say the trek from Krestova has meant a shift of the Freedomite capital to Grand Forks. They say that, of the original 700 odd marchers who arrived here, about 300 appear to have taken up permanent residence.

A senior RCMP officer, long-familiar with the Doukhobor problem, said he was surprised that the tekkers included very few men or women between the ages of 20 and 30 years.

'The people who are going to Agassiz have nowhere else to go,' he said. 'The ones who are staying here have found jobs or are living on farms of relatives. Many of the real Freedomites are remaining. It looks like Grand Forks is going to be the new Freedomite capital.'

John Verigin, spiritual leader of the orthodox Doukhobors, said Friday, he is pleased that some Freedomites are leaving Grand Forks. He watched the departures through field glasses from a nearby farm.

Forty carloads of supporters guarded his house against attack, as the Freedomite cars passed on the highway in front of his farm.

'I am pleased that they are leaving Grand Forks but I am concerned about those who are remaining,' he said.

Freedomites spoke of a 'secret conspiracy' that has caused terrorism and bombings in the past. Spokesman Fanny Storgoff said: 'Our destination is the Beuchenwald they have built for us at Agassiz. There is nothing for us at home. Everything is burned. The government will have to look after us now and we'll go to our prison.'

The Freedomites issued a statement Friday which said in part: 'Do with us as you wish. Do with our bodies as you think necessary – soap, fertilizer, handbags, lamp shades and bind your books with our hides.'

'If you find that Mountain Prison will not accommodate all of us then build us a duplicate at Krestova.'

Friday's move had its humorous aspect. An RCMP officer, while checking a Freedomite car, found a large garlic sausage. He said he asked the Freedomite why they had the sausage when all Doukhobors are supposed to be vegetarians.

The Doukhobor replied: 'There is no meat in a Canadian garlic sausage.'



Veteran Barry Bradley contributed the details of this webpage from his old newspaper scrapebook which he developed while serving in the Force in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.