

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Life at the Peoples Temple Project at Jonestown, Guyana

Editor — The latest salvo against the Peoples Temple that your paper grabbed on to is the allegation made by Deborah Layton (The Chronicle, June 15). Her mother, Lisa, and her brother, Larry, both denounced her and stated the reasons why. No reference was made to their charges in your paper . . .

On May 28 at a press conference when your reporter was present, Rev. John Moore and his wife, who had just returned from Jonestown, Guyana, said as follows:

"I'm John Moore. I'm pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Reno, Nevada. We have two daughters who are members of the Temple, obviously my wife and I are not members of the Temple. One, the older girl's a teacher, and the younger one is a nurse. The two words that come to my mind, immediately as I was there and as I tried to reflect upon my experiences were 'impressive' and 'amazing.' It almost boggles my mind to see that great clearing and to understand how so much could have been done in the relatively short period of time. I think about a thousand acres, 800 acres have been cleared, and it's in the midst of a jungle, and that's part of what's impressive, and all except a part of the land that's not been finally cleared, has been planted with various crops.

"I had a feeling of freedom. Neither in Georgetown, where there were about 25 or 30 people living, coming and going, all the time, with total freedom, nor at the project itself, did we — did I have — I'll let my wife speak for herself — did I have any feeling that anybody was being restrained or coerced or intimidated in any way. What did impress me was that people who were living in Georgetown, in the house there, were all eagerly waiting for the time when they could return to Jonestown, and the project itself. One of the great things, I think, is the opportunity for some of the younger people, particularly, to be learning skills when that opportunity is not present here.

"They have probably 35 pre-schoolers. I don't know how many they have in school; they have newborn babies, several babies have been born there. They have a daycare nursery for parents who work, and there are those who are

caring for them; and then they have the older people. That's really a part of the beauty of it, we felt.

"The school is accredited by the government of Guyana, that they've had people from the Department of Agriculture and their agricultural stations there working with the people at the project. And certainly their supporting of the health center, there's no question in my mind but that the health center is the best facility in that whole region in Guyana. There is a government, I think, nurse practitioner, in Port Kaituma a few miles away, but that simply does not have either the personnel, skills nor the equipment that they have. The health services are provided for the AmerIndians or people who live in the community as well as the members of the project itself."

Mrs. Barbara Moore said: "My impressions are, having just experienced our visit there, that this is a beautiful, heroic, creative project! It is absolutely miraculous. There are excellent medical services, excellent educational services, and . . . it's a community of caring and sharing with an added dimension, and this dimension I would say, is love. If you want to use that term; in a sense it reminds me of . . . a New Testament community, in the purest sense of the word, in the love and concern for all, that we observed. And with complete freedom for creativity; those who want to farm, are farming; those who want to teach, teach; those who like to cook, cook; they have an excellent nutritionist who is working scientifically all the time to discover new uses for the indigenous plants and growths there, and is in contact with the Guyanese experts to discover new and useful uses for these various crops, there. That was very impressive to me. It was most impressive to see the elderly people, the older folks, who had their neat little yards, their little white picket-type fences, and their opportunity to take classes if they wished to, or to garden, or to just sit. They also have a lovely library of over 8000 volumes, from poetry to 'how-to-do-it' . . .

"It's a complete city and one thing they do encourage is the nuclear family. You can choose to have your own home, or if you're a single person, you may live in a

dormitory, whichever you prefer. They have a lovely nursery for infants; they have a nursery for toddlers, and of course a fine educational set up."

Not one word of the foregoing was reported. Rev. and Mrs. Moore spent in excess of two weeks at the jungle mission. Isn't it about time that the voices of the 1400 persons who are in Guyana pioneering a new way of life receive equal coverage?

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San Francisco

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San Francisco Chronicle

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