

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE
POSTAL OPERATIONS AND SERVICES
CITIES AND POPULATION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 10, 1978

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Mr. Mark Lane
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1177 Central Ave.
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Dear Mr. Lane:

I am in receipt of your letter regarding the proposed visit of a delegation from the House International Relations Committee to the nation of Guyana. While I am pleased to have your offer of assistance to the Committee on behalf of the People's Temple at Jonestown I must respectfully dissent from certain assumptions which were apparent in your letter.

First, the Committee and its staff, as a matter of policy and standard practice, works through our Embassy and the government of the nation which it visits. Second, it is my policy, when I am a delegation Chairman conducting inquiries at home or abroad, to deal with the principals in a given situation. To that end, I sent a telegram on November 1 to Mr. Jim Jones asking for his cooperation in a matter affecting the personal lives of an unknown but large number of U.S. citizens, who are presently residing on his property in Jonestown and in Georgetown. He has not yet replied, but I presume he is in touch with the American Embassy and Ambassador John Burke about this inquiry. It is for this reason that I asked Mr. James Schollaert, as an attorney on the staff of the Committee, to respond to your telephone inquiry, to which you make reference.

I regret that you will not be able to be in Guyana, this next week, but I understand that Mr. Jones has other legal counsel available in the event he feels such counsel is necessary. In a situation where the Committee schedule does not coincide with your own personal schedule, I must obviously resolve such a conflict for the United States House of Representatives. I hope that you will understand.

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AA-1-6-3

November 12, 1978

I am also interested in your statement that "various agencies of the U.S. Government have somewhat consistently oppressed the People's Temple." Any such assumption with regard to our Committee is grossly in error. I am interested in locating and talking to certain persons in that community whose mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands and wives have asked me to inquire on their behalf.

It is true that most of the comments I have heard from relatives are negative, but that is precisely the purpose of this inquiry. Rather than take the word of relatives who can be presumed to be under some emotional bias, I intend to go to the source and to allow those "on the other side" the opportunity to speak in their own behalf. In this case, I have offered Mr. Jones and his supporters the full opportunity to speak for themselves. I presume they will accept such an offer. It is made with the full intention of allowing any and all to speak for the record.

I am at a loss to understand the references on the second page of your letter to members of Mr. Jones' group who have had to "flee from the United States to enjoy their freedom." I certainly hope such persons will be available to give such testimony to support your comment.

I am even more puzzled by your further vague references to one or two other countries that have offered "refuge" to the 1200 Americans in Jonestown. Am I to understand, then, that all 1200 have already been asked if they would be willing to travel to yet another country and begin their lives, under what must already be difficult conditions at best? Perhaps we can learn more about that after we arrive.

Finally, Mr. Lane, I am truly disappointed with your use of the phrase "witch hunt" in connection with an open and honest inquiry of the United States House of Representatives into the welfare of American citizens presently living in Jonestown. The committee asks no more of Mr. Jones than any parent does whose son or daughter is away at school or whose mother or father resides in a distant convalescent home or hospital.

No "persecution", as you put it, is intended, Mr. Lane. But your vague reference to the "the creation of the most embarrassing situation for the American government" does not impress me at all. If the comment is intended as a threat,

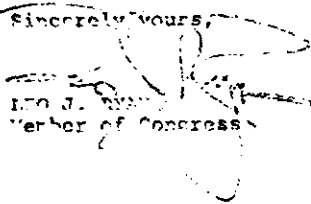
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I believe it reveals more than may have been intended. I presume Mr. Jones would not be supportive of such a comment.

The Committee does intend to leave as scheduled. It does intend to discuss the whereabouts, living conditions and general welfare of the 1200 Americans you refer to, with our Embassy, with the officials of the nation of Guyana and of course, we hope, with Mr. Jones as the leader of the group. We ask for and hope for the cooperation of all. I, too, hope that the inquiry can move ahead in an amicable fashion.

Sincerely yours,


Leo J. Ryan
Member of Congress

LJR/cg

cc: Reverend Jim Jones
Foreign Minister of Guyana
Prime Minister of Guyana
Ambassador Laurence Mann of Guyana
Ambassador John Burke of United States
Assistant Secretary of State
for Latin American Affairs

AA-1-6-5