

INTO JONESTOWN WITH A CAMERA?

through Mazor -- exclusive material of an incriminating nature against Peoples Temple.

Kenney's campaign resulted in at least one article in the San Francisco Chronicle last month, concerning an alleged tape recording of a telephone conversation, in which Temple members supposedly discussed irregularities on the notary seal of a document transferring title of a member's home to the Temple. The allegations raised in that story are now also in dispute.

"In another strange twist to the Peoples Temple story, American Indian Movement leader Dennis Banks charged recently that he was approached on March 23 by a man who identified himself "as working with the Treasury Department, with an Internal Revenue Service agent, and with two men from the San Francisco Police Department."

The man, who Banks and his associate Lehman Brightman identified as David Conn, then allegedly offered Banks help with his extradition problems in exchange for "a public denunciation" of Jim Jones. Banks is facing possible extradition from California to South Dakota.

Banks has long been a Peoples Temple supporter, and has attended Temple services three or four times. The Temple also made a loan of \$19,000 to bail Bank's wife out of prison last year. Her charges were subsequently dropped and the money was returned.

"Conn was obviously making a deal with me," Banks charged in a sworn affidavit presented at a press conference earlier this month. "I was being blackmailed.

"These agents all knew that I had a lot hanging over me. Besides the extradition, I also had a case in federal court in which the Treasury Department was involved. I have often made it clear that if I am extradited to South Dakota, that is like a sentence of death, because I am certain I will be killed there."

Banks also quoted Conn as saying that he has been investigating Peoples Temple for seven years, and was working with several ex-members, including Grace Stoen, who turned out to be another source for the New West articles.

When reached by the Barb this week, Conn admitted that he has been investigating Peoples Temple for seven years, but said that he had undertaken the project on his own, as a private matter, "because I became aware that this is one of the worst religious frauds being perpetrated. This man is ripping off the black people."

Conn also admitted that he sought out Dennis Banks and arranged a meeting, but his version of what transpired on March 23 was notably different.

"I wanted to talk to Banks because I respect the guy, and I was afraid that he was going to discredit himself through his association with Peoples Temple, without really knowing what they were about."

Conn, a surveyor employed by the Standard Oil Corporation, denies that he ever mentioned Banks' extradition or offered him any deals. He claims that he only mentioned the Treasury Department and other government agencies in passing, pointing out to Banks that they were conducting their own investigations of Reverend Jones and the Temple.

In fact, Conn said, it was he and Santa Rosa freelance journalist George Kline-man who approached various police and governmental agencies last fall, offering them witnesses and documents with which to attack the Temple. No investigations were underway before that time.

Both George Kline-man and David Conn also have connections to the New West articles -- Kline-man was credited with helping write the stories, while Conn was a secondary source and appeared at a New West-sponsored press conference held at the Sheraton Palace Hotel July 20 to help promote the articles.

In addition, Conn is a close personal

friend of the Mertles; the main sources for much anti-Temple publicity. By his own admission, Conn was investigating the Temple during all the years that his friends the Mertles were members.

It is also the Mertles who hired private eye Mazor and retained San Francisco attorney Daniel Deneberg to file a lawsuit against the Temple.

But nobody has been served with legal papers yet, and so for the moment there is still no way to get witnesses on the stand, under oath, to try to get at the truth about Peoples Temple once and for all.

Jim Jones is still in Guyana, where he has remained since before publication of the first anti-Temple articles on attorney Garry's orders. According to reports from Guyana, relayed by Garry, there have been two attempts on Jones' life in the last month, one staged by "three white people with guns" who came onto the Temple's 5000-acre mission.

The Dennis Banks press conference, held in Garry's downtown San Francisco office, marks the first time that Temple officials have made any comment about the various charges raised by New West and other media.

But they are still refusing to respond concretely to any particular accusations, on the grounds that they still don't know who is responsible for these attacks. "We're going to keep our mouths shut," said attorney Garry, "until the dust settles and we get to the bottom of this. It looks like a conspiracy to me."

Are Investigators Trying To Destroy A Progressive Church?

Berkeley Barb, Sept. 23-29, 1977: "Mazor has admitted.. that he was first employed to investigate Peoples Temple... eight months before publication of the New West article. He refuses to say who retained him... he did reveal that his employer was an outsider, not a past or present member of Peoples Temple..."

"Mazor has admitted that he was first employed to investigate Peoples Temple... eight months before publication of the first New West article. But he refuses to say who retained him... though he did reveal that his employer was an outsider, and not a past or present member of Peoples Temple. [He] is also actively seeking publicity to discredit Peoples Temple... Mazor hired one of the largest public relations firms in San Francisco... Bob Kenney, an account executive at Lowry, Russom and Leeper, confirmed... that he has been working for Mazor 'on this [Peoples Temple] project... [including] sending out letters to selected journalists, offering them -- through Mazor... exclusive material of an incriminating nature."