

Collective Welfare as Resource Mobilization in Peoples Temple: A Case Study of a Poor People's Religious Social Movement*

John R. Hall

University of Missouri at Columbia

Previous research on resource mobilization in religious social movements represents one side of a sociological equation that can be balanced by investigating resource allocation, toward both collective goals and individual needs of participants. Peoples Temple offers an instructive example of the resource-related organizational tensions in a poor people's movement. Its communal and world-transforming orientation was grafted onto conventional fund-raising techniques in ways that exacerbated conflict with external critics. Internally, the Temple became a charismatic bureaucracy that may be seen both as a "greedy institution" and, paradoxically, as a "corporation of people" that operated to lessen the social alienation of its members.

Ever since the emergence of the latest wave of U.S. religious social movements, there has been controversy about their methods of finance and massing of wealth. Critics based in the anti-cult movement often have charged "cults" with out-and-out charlatanism, with deceit in obtaining wealth, and with accumulating capital far beyond whatever religious purposes might be served. Second only to charges of "brainwashing" or coercive persuasion in recruitment, the issue of financing was one that captivated the client mass media audience of the anti-cult movement (cf. Bromley and Shupe, 1980). The issue of financing also has been a key basis of social control by the State (cf. Beckford, 1985: 285-6; Robbins and Robertson, 1987), for while State interference in religious matters is legally proscribed in the Constitution, the issue of tax exemption of religious organizations offers one sanctioned avenue of State monitoring.

By now, there have been a number of important studies that consider the financial aspects of the new religions. Bromley and Shupe (1980) have applied McCarthy and Zald's (1977) resource mobilization theory to the puzzle of how anti-establishment groups can obtain financing from solicitation in the society-at-large. Richardson (1982) has argued forcefully that methods of financing are diverse, and that the approaches used in the study of communal

* This essay is based in part on a comprehensive study of Peoples Temple (Hall, 1987) which provides specific references for unpublished and local source data upon which the analysis is based. An archive containing all unpublished materials cited in the study has been established at the Library of the California Historical Society, San Francisco, California.

groups may provide models of analysis. My own study of religious and secular communal groups (Hall, 1978) offered a Weberian typology of want satisfaction as a basis for the comparative analysis of group economics. The emerging theoretical frameworks have been drawn on by Khalsa (1986) in explaining the alternative patterns of want satisfaction in three new religious movements, and Rochford (1985) has traced how patterns of financing shifted in the Krishna society as its relation to society-at-large changed. On another front, Shupe and Bromley (1986) have shown that the issues of financing and charlatanism are hardly the monopoly of the new religious social movements, a point underscored by the collapse of Jim and Tammy Bakker's empire.

In part the scholarly agenda has been driven by the popular concerns with charlatanism and "excessive" wealth. Though it is entirely proper to address these issues, they may have influenced the kinds of questions that have been posed in ways that have limited our understanding of the new religious social movements. For all its merits, resource mobilization theory can be used to give undue emphasis to the amassing of resources rather than to their deployment. Simply looking at sources and methods of resource mobilization does not offer a basis for understanding how an organization survives.

Kanter (1972) has developed a general theory of commitment that she applied to communal groups, and that, as Richardson (1982) suggests, can become a basis for understanding religious social movements. As Kanter argued, financing is not everything, for organizations succeed in part on other bases of individual commitment to organizations, namely cohesion (or solidarity) and social control. Even if the issue is narrowed to the economic aspect of commitment, obtaining resources is only part of the equation. A re-analysis of Kanter's data (Hall, 1988) shows that effective resource mobilization is an insufficient basis for group success, and that monitoring by either a solitary egalitarian group or the top echelon of a hierarchy is necessary to prevent "free riders" from appropriating group resources and triggering a collapse of collective morale. A parallel study of mainstream denominations (Hilke, 1980) shows that voluntary contributions can be explained in part on the basis of dealing with the free rider problem by organizational monitoring.

In short, the mobilization of resources in religious social movements cannot be understood independently of whether and how those resources are being allocated to participants' wants and to group goals. Further, a new religious social movement faces complex organizational dilemmas in balancing the strategies of resource mobilization and allocation, for such groups often charismatically espouse "apocalyptic" (Hall, 1978) or "world-transforming" (Bromley and Shupe, 1980) tendencies that must be reconciled with more economically rational methods of finance and administration (Bromley, forthcoming).

Peoples Temple, the religious social movement led by Jim Jones, represents an important case in which to understand the interplay of resource mobilization and allocation, monitoring and administration. In the first place, the group was the object of strong public criticism for its financing techniques, and a clear record of its approach needs to be established. Second, the Temple was the sort of world-transforming organization that presents the anomalies of resource mobilization identified by Bromley and Shupe. Third, its patterns of financing were diverse, and it involved the communal setting identified by Richardson (1982) as especially salient for understanding the total equation of financing. Fourth, and a point that often has been ignored in the contemporary debate about new religious movements, such organizations often confront key cultural contradictions of their era, and their solutions to dilemmas sometimes represent harbingers of the future (Weber, 1958; Hall, 1978: 208ff.).

Despite the collapse in apparently irrational murder and mass suicide, Peoples Temple developed innovative forms of social organization based on its economic organization. Like less infamous religious social movements, both historically and currently, Peoples Temple was an organization propelled in part by the dictates of rationality. In many ways, the group

borrowed tried and true techniques of fundamentalist religion and modern organizational practices more generally. But the Temple's collectivist form and its unusual sense of mission also propelled it toward a new, synthetic bureaucratic form, one that mirrored the logic of the State and large corporations, but with a different orientation. Peoples Temple became a corporation of people.

THE BUSINESS OF APOSTOLIC SOCIALISM

For complex reasons, connections between religion and economy often define the core of a culture. The classic demonstration by Max Weber (1958) traces the rise of a Protestant ethic of self-discipline for work held by newly autonomous individuals set adrift in an industrializing world of rational capitalism, where cultural requirements differed radically from those of the preceding feudal and mercantilist economies.

If religious values infuse economic life, principles of economic activity of an age also undergird religion. Even while Protestant theology has promoted the idea that each individual can have a personal relation to God, the modern organization of Protestantism, like other religions, has tended toward increasingly businesslike, rational, bureaucratic, and hierarchical solutions. Why is this so? Applied to churches themselves, the spirit of capitalism suggests a form of religious organization that maximizes the Lord's return on His work on earth. Moreover, like other enterprises, churches in the twentieth century have had to become increasingly businesslike in order to administer effectively their worldly dealings with banks, lawyers, investment firms, and the like. In addition, since about the turn of the twentieth century, liberal denominations have pursued the social gospel while an emerging philosophy of "corporate liberalism" has placed the State in the position of contending with the social problems resulting from industrial capitalism. The convergent interests of the liberal churches and the State in social welfare have coupled church agencies with an ever more complex array of governmental social service bureaucracies, and they have had to adopt similar organizational forms and practices in order to be effective (cf. Harrison, 1969). Finally, in the past century, secular culture itself has undergone a transition from predominantly folk styles to an overwhelmingly mass culture, and some of the churches have succumbed to "fighting fire with fire" by adopting the technology and sensibilities of mass culture to promote their own message (cf. Hadden and Swann, 1981). The upshot of "modernization" is that religions today are businesses, often big businesses.

What sort of business, then, was Peoples Temple? Essentially it followed the 1930s Peace Mission model of the patron whom Jim Jones adopted in Indianapolis, Indiana, during the 1950s, Father M. J. Divine. During the 1930s, Father Divine had placed himself at the center of a vast patrimonial empire of redistribution financed through members' tithing and the profits from numerous Peace Mission businesses. Outsiders long have ridiculed Divine's style and substance, but a revisionist historian (Weisbrot, 1983) argues that he struggled for dignity and justice for both blacks and whites, and offered his followers a road of material as well as spiritual salvation at a time when the Great Depression had laid waste the social landscape all around them.

Like Father Divine, Jim Jones offered an unusual blend of spiritual, social, and material salvation. Like Father Divine, Jones saw the practical needs of this pastoral program. He seems to have been well aware of his business acumen even before he led 70 families on a religious migration from Indiana to California in 1965. In Indianapolis Jones confided to an official of the Temple's denomination, the Disciples of Christ: "You know, I am embarrassed sometimes, because everything I touch turns to money." Yet in the early California years of

what Jones termed "apostolic socialism," the money didn't come easily. Peoples Temple ran the gamut of petty church money-making schemes. They had bake sales. They ran clothing drives. There were rummage sales. Every year they held a Christmas drive for the underprivileged. They began selling refreshments at civic events, from a senior citizens dance to the local high school football games. The Temple even bought a small shopette next to the gas station in the center of the village they settled in, Redwood Valley. In a modern revival of the Peace Mission approach, they installed administrative offices on the upper level, leaving the ground floor for a Temple laundromat and other small businesses.

The key to Jones's success, however, was converts, not small-scale fund-raisers. But the reasoning behind the desire for growth was hardly that of conventional pyramiding evangelical operations. Because Jones always regarded his following as a threat to the established order, he sought safety in numbers: "There was always the object of bringing in more people so we'd have a larger number and maybe wouldn't get harassed as much."

In California during the latter part of the '60s, Peoples Temple had had only limited success drawing members from beyond the Indiana circle. By 1969, church membership still was only a reported 300 persons. But after the Temple expanded its activities to the ghettos of San Francisco and Los Angeles, membership shot up, more than doubling to 712 in 1970-71, and climbing to 2,203 in 1972.

THE HOME CARE FRANCHISE SYSTEM

The snowballing expansion to urban California fueled growth along the lines of the Peace Mission model. Like the Peace Mission, Peoples Temple operated as a redistributive welfare system centered on a man declared to be God in the flesh. Like the Peace Mission, Peoples Temple was founded on the principle of the church as a surrogate extended family that substituted for the natural family. Consonant with its approach, the Temple made family-like demands for economic contribution to the general welfare, and in turn, supported people who took on the communal commitment to the Temple. But there was a decisive difference between the Peace Mission and Peoples Temple. When Father Divine had his heyday during the 1930s, the welfare state was hardly yet established; by the time of Peoples Temple, it was a *fait accompli*. Dealing with the clients of the welfare state became a central business of Peoples Temple.

By the 1950s, "the great confinement" (Foucault, 1965) had packed the back wards of state mental hospitals. Juvenile delinquents and "incorrigible" children could be found in similar facilities. But the advent of psychotherapeutic drugs shifted the boundaries of confinement from physical walls to pills: "acting out" behavior could be prevented thorough administration of anti-psychotic drugs like Thorazine and Lithium. The net result was that senile patients, chronic schizophrenics, and juveniles with behavioral disorders often could be discharged from hospitals and detention centers to be maintained in less restrictive facilities—halfway houses, family care homes and board and care homes (Chu and Trotter, 1974).

In the 1960s, California pioneered in what came to be called "deinstitutionalization." Especially important was Federal funding through Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, which provided for non-hospital room and board. The emigration from hospitals was phenomenal. At Mendocino State Hospital, where several Peoples Temple members worked, the patient census dropped from 3,000 in the early 60s to 1,200 in 1969. A number of convalescent homes around Ukiah took in its patients.

Peoples Temple itself began organizing care homes for the burgeoning and potentially lucrative market in community care for the "socially dependent." They took in not only

elderly psychiatric patients, but those simply requiring nursing home care, as well as younger mentally retarded people, and the minors who had been declared "incorrigible" by their parents, or become wards of the state in other ways.

Jim Jones and his followers had operated nursing homes in Indianapolis, and in California. Jones's wife, Marceline Jones, and as many as five other Temple members worked on the psychiatric hospital staff, and Marceline Jones was a visiting nurse who looked in on patients placed in care homes. At least eight other Temple members at various times worked for another agency serving care home residents, Mendocino County's Department of Social Services. These Temple workers provided an important liaison between the welfare system and the series of care homes that were established by still other Temple members.

Over the years, Temple members acquired houses in the rural village of Redwood Valley. Transforming the houses into facilities with names like Green Acres, Whispering Pines, Fireside Lodge, and Hilltop Haven, the Temple began to take clients placed through Mendocino State Hospital, the Mendocino County Department of Social Services, and the Juvenile Court. There were no less than nine Temple "residential care" homes for the elderly, six homes for foster children, and Happy Acres, a state-licensed 40 acre ranch for mentally retarded persons with developmental special needs. No doubt other Temple "family care" homes and individual families took in smaller numbers of clients under less restrictive licensing arrangements and guardianship.

In many cases the Temple itself recruited clients for its care homes, sometimes from its own congregations in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Temple staff on hand after services counseled members of the congregation about everything from automobile accidents to welfare eligibility. Elderly Temple members, children in the juvenile justice system, and others who qualified for welfare assistance often could have their dealings with the welfare bureaucracy managed by Temple social workers, and Peoples Temple in effect operated a client advocacy program that offered its own facilities to house eligible clients. It is a formula that has been adopted by other church groups dedicated to serving the poor, for example, the Franciscan Order in New York City (ABC-TV News, 1/25/84).

Nevertheless, the Temple's approach to social service delivery constituted a threat to the established system, particularly at the county level. Because the Temple cultivated an independent source of clients, to a certain degree it rerouted authority to provide social services outside the established inter-organizational social welfare network, thereby challenging existing network organizations (cf. Benson, 1975).

In an industry plagued with poor care and profiteering among vendors (Chu and Trotter, 1974; Segal and Aviram, 1978), various investigations show that Temple operators performed practically without malfeasance. The clients probably received reasonably good care. But Peoples Temple still managed to make a tidy profit. In the early California years, Temple members operated care homes as individuals. But beginning in 1971, Peoples Temple used debt financing to purchase a series of houses for care facilities, leasing them to individuals licensed to operate them. Thus, just like private sector vendors, the Temple built up equity in the homes operated by its members. Moreover, the Temple neglected to pay taxes on its income from rental payments by member operators, though most church income outside of donations, including profits from financing care homes for member operators, would probably be considered "unrelated business income," and fall outside the non-profit church guidelines of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

Aside from real estate equity and tax avoidance, there were two additional channels, often intermingled, by which the care-home profits flowed. In the first place, Peoples Temple essentially acted as a franchiser of a succession of individual operators, offering them "slots" in a conglomerate that depended on centralized expertise in licensing, care techniques, and so forth. Given the *de facto* administrative control the Temple exercised over care-home opera-

tors, it was logical for the Temple to integrate vertically material services to individual vendors as well. The Temple would engage in central purchasing, and scrounge for resources from any quarter, allegedly once even stealing truckloads of federal surplus food from a San Francisco warehouse. Through centralized acquisition and distribution, and by coupling its nursing home operations with other charitable activities such as clothing drives, the Temple was able to introduce franchise-style economies of scale out of reach of independent operators.

Second, because the Temple care home operators in effect worked as participants in what was called Peoples Temple's "human services" ministry, they were expected to pay the taxes on their home care income, live frugally, and tithe the bulk of their profits back to the Temple, so that the Temple's good works could be expanded even further. Sometimes operators simply signed over checks and received all their needs from the central "franchiser." In effect, the operators were treated like members of Catholic lay orders guaranteed a living while they engage in church service. Thus, Temple profit came not only from its franchising and vertical integration, but also from the subordination of individual profit to the collective (cf. Hall, 1978, chapter 5).

It is difficult to make even an approximate accounting of care home profits. One apostate said that out of a monthly care per client income of \$2,000 on a home he helped run for emotionally disturbed boys, he transferred about \$900 to \$1,000 to Peoples Temple (Kilduff and Tracy, 1978). But he also received certain non-cash supplies from the Temple, so net Temple profit would have been somewhat lower than 50%, probably no higher than 40%. An October, 1972, accounting of the ranch for the mentally retarded shows a complicated operation, with basic outlays for food, clothing, allowances, mortgage, entertainment, and doctors' bills. Also listed were expenditures for wages and maintenance service, perhaps indicating that some Temple members were paid (low) wages for their work in Temple sponsored businesses. When all the expenses were deducted from the \$3,333 that apparently came from welfare transfer payments, the net "commitment" turned over to the church was about \$800 to \$900, or around 25%. A local social service administrator estimated that over the period from 1966 through 1976, the gross receipts of homes operated by Temple members were approximately \$648,000. If the Temple's rate of profit ranged between 25% and 40% (within industry norms), the church's total net income over the years amounted to between \$162,000 and \$259,000. Presumably there was more, from other care homes that the administrator didn't realize were run by Temple members.

MONEY SCHEMES AND MONEY MANAGEMENT

The care homes were profitable, but they hardly begin to account for the millions of dollars Peoples Temple amassed. Temple capital formation was not based on windfall profits; it flowed from a multitude of activities, many of them small in scale, conducted over and over again. Transfer payments for welfare clients, for example, did not exhaust income that came from Temple property. Jones's followers cultivated 7,200 grape vines at their ranch in northern California, and a smaller number on the land next to the church and parsonage there. The Children's Home October, 1972, monthly financial statement reported \$2,252 in income from selling the vineyards' harvest to Parducci Wine Cellars. Presumably, church members, including care recipients, worked in the harvest. Then there was \$134 in "miscellaneous income," which probably came from one of the panoply of money-making schemes church members operated.

These money-makers, like the home care operations, often both depended upon and

reinforced the flow of believers into Jim Jones's flock. One woman who later left Peoples Temple and eventually led the opposition to it seemed to have a knack for raising money, and Jones asked her to dream up projects. The approach mirrored practices of other media evangelicals who plied similar spiritual waters. The woman set up sales counters at the San Francisco and Los Angeles Temples where charm photographs of Jim Jones in cheap locketts went for prices from \$1.50 to \$6. At the end of a service, Jones would berate people as they departed, "You say you don't need your oil, you don't need the pictures, you don't need the candles? You'd better get them while you can, because they won't always be around." Sales were brisk (cf. Thielmann and Merrill, 1979: 72). Concessions brought in from \$2,000 to \$3,000 every weekend.

Together with her husband, the same woman also implemented the mass mailing scheme. Jones recalled his rationale: "Well, some healers do this. I have a genuine healing ministry; maybe we ought to consider it." Temple staff studied what others with the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit were putting out, and the Temple mimicked an already flourishing approach to religious financing. Like other mass mailing operations that included testimonials, Temple monthly mailers proclaimed that "Blessings Are Flowing," and reproduced letters like one from J. Williams, who wrote, "Dear Pastor Jones . . . I put your Anointed Oil and your picture on my hip as soon as I received it. The picture stuck to my hip. I could walk with it, cook with it, bend down, sit, all with no pain at all. I was healed right then." From their own homes, those on the mailing list could order: cuff links with anointed pictures of Jim Jones in them; various locketts with photos for "safety from evil," "safety from attack," or "safety on the road"; anointed oil and souvenir dinner plates with pictures of the Los Angeles or San Francisco Temple.

What the Temple did with direct mail is hardly a testament to their ingenuity. Instead it simply reflects extensive wider cultural practices of capital accumulation through direct mail solicitation. There is no way to count the number of charlatans working such operations, but even apparently *bona fide* fundamentalist ministries, such as Jimmie Swaggart's, use the same gift catalogues, the promise of blessings, and sometimes, the same apocalyptic harangues—witness Swaggart's about "The Year of Persecution," in which, "You see, beloved, the devil is doing everything possible to stop this Ministry."

Jim Jones claimed reluctance about direct mail schemes, saying "I'll have the devil to pay." But he didn't stop them. Even after the woman in charge of money-making schemes and her husband defected in 1976, Jones kept the mailer operation intact, though the content gradually shifted from an emphasis on healing to a description of how the "agricultural mission" at Jonestown reflected "a day of new hope and abundance for all people."

The mailers were not the only source of media income. Like other religious outfits, Peoples Temple took to the radio air waves, eventually producing programs in their own Redwood Valley recording studio. Here again, Peoples Temple simply geared into the previously existing institution of radio religion, in which preachers typically buy fifteen-minute time slots on stations like the Mexico-based XRG. Radio ministers run the gamut from mystic Cajun faith healers to anti-communist preachers of civil religion. They use their air time as they see fit, sometimes offering prophecy, interpreting the Bible, promising healings, always asking at the end for donations or at least a letter of Christian love. Peoples Temple effectively mimicked other radio religions, many of them small outfits like the Temple, others nationally known operations. One listener who never attended services said of Jim Jones, "He's on there like Oral Roberts, you know, and Reverend Ike."

Mailer and radio income declined once the Temple's operations shifted to Guyana in 1977. But in the early years, it must have been substantial. The woman who had been in charge of money-makers said after she left Peoples Temple that they had "averaged about \$800 a day." The estimate may be a bit low. At the peak of about 11,000 direct mail pieces per

month, Peoples Temple is said to have taken in well over \$300,000 a year from the media ministry.

But that was just the beginning. Those who responded to Peoples Temple appeals, either from the mailings or radio ministry, were treated as a valuable resource. Their names found their way onto mailing lists, and logs were created to trace the individual donations, their spiritual and healing needs, Temple return responses, and their potential for becoming Temple members. A crew of Temple corresponding secretaries often would answer letters personally, with a touch sought after, but hard to duplicate in the word-processing technology of the direct mail industry. By artful use of mass media, the Temple fed cash into a steady stream that grew large by the diversity of its tributaries, and it fed its membership roster on procedures that allowed Temple personnel to size up whether potential members were ripe for the Temple's unusual theological and social dispensation.

Intake depended on various devices to exclude people who did not go out of their way to embrace the Temple. In one approach, people on the newsletter mailing list were informed that anyone who did not write back would be assumed no longer interested in the Temple, and dropped from the mailing list. If someone asked about attending services, a judgment was made about what type of person was writing, and whether he or she might be receptive to the Temple's unusual theology. Those who did attend the semi-public services underwent more screening at the door. Those who were allowed to enter had to provide basic personal data—name, address, telephone number, and what they did for a living.

All kinds of Californians attended Temple services only once and never returned. Still others came occasionally; though they never joined, they ended up supporting the Temple financially all the same. Aside from the charm photo counter, there was the offering. Jones made sure his audience understood that their donations didn't go to support the lavish lifestyle of some jackleg preacher; instead, the offering was fed into expanding the "human services" ministry, buying buses, care homes, and church buildings, and eventually, developing what he called the Promised Land—the communal settlement then being established in Guyana—as a refuge available to them all.

The pitch for an offering seems to have been about as "high pressure" as that of more conventional Pentecostal churches (Paris, 1982: 61ff.). Sometimes Jones would tell his audience the results of an offering. He was known to underestimate substantially the amount taken. And like his Pentecostal brothers, the preacher insisted on a second offering if he deemed the first one insufficient. "That last one only showed \$180," Jones would say. "Now folks, I hope you'll just slip something into that envelope."

The income from the offering was sizable, all the more so when it came in week after week. A defector once told of taking in as much as a total of \$37,000 from weekly services in Los Angeles and San Francisco, though elsewhere she described an average 1973 weekend income of around \$15,000 (Kilduff and Tracy, 1978). Even this more conservative estimate would amount to an income of more than \$750,000 every year.

On top of the offering, the Temple took in other valuables and jewelry that people tossed into the bucket in the fervor of support for the cause. To all this would have to be added the monies that members brought in from bake sales and other petty financial schemes, street solicitation activities that Jones assigned occasionally, or wages that were sometimes appropriated as punishment. Then there were the financial opportunities developed by Temple counselors at services in the cities. They could help with tax and welfare matters, and they could encourage those who qualified to live in Redwood Valley care homes. Sometimes they came upon a windfall, like a woman who had an insurance claim. Of the \$10,000 due in settlement, \$8,000 was to go directly to the Temple.

With Jones and his staff persistently working every possible angle, everything seemed to turn to money. But there were substantial expenses—from \$30,000 to \$50,000 in vehicle

operation and maintenance expenses every month, a small payroll, the various outlays associated with media and other income-producing enterprises, food for communal church meals, and so on. For most of his career, Jones himself received no personal income from Peoples Temple. Instead, for many years Marcie would put her nurse's paycheck into a "special fund" to provide for family needs and possible retirement. Eventually, in 1977, Peoples Temple's Board of Directors voted Jones a yearly salary of \$30,000.

The biggest expense was the "agricultural mission." After the decision was made in the fall of 1973 to go ahead with the project in Guyana, a flow of perhaps three million dollars went into its development. In November of 1976 alone, the Temple authorized \$310,000 in purchases of trucks, a steam generator, agricultural machinery, and other heavy equipment.

All the outlays notwithstanding, however, the Temple was accumulating a substantial lode of capital. Huge piles of cash on hand represented ready money that could be allocated without anyone tracing its flow. A whole raft of people were needed to keep track of the Temple's finances. After events in the early '70s led to development of a plan to migrate from the U.S. "at the first sign of outright persecution," Jones and his most trusted aides devised a plan to act as trustees for the millions of dollars, investing the funds as a cushion against the uncertainty of their future and as a source of capital to finance the substantial project of building a foreign colony for hundreds of people. Using the same practices of corporations that seek to avoid U.S. Internal Revenue Service regulations by shifting money out of the U.S. (*Washington Post Weekly* 2/20/84: 6-7) and those of clandestine governmental operations "laundering" money, the Temple placed much of its money in dummy "offshore" accounts in countries with more favorable and more private banking laws. At one time or another, Temple staff deposited money in small private accounts as well as enormous "front organization" accounts with names like "Asociacion Evangelica de las Americas." The money from all sources was spread out at banks in the Caribbean, Panama, Venezuela, and Switzerland, as well as Guyana.

After November, 1978, the Temple's net worth was established by the court appointed receiver, Robert Fabian. He couldn't get the government of Guyana to return about \$1 million, but by clearing out the foreign accounts and liquidating Temple real assets, Fabian amassed \$10 million.

Was that a lot of money? Jones once said, "I have made the poor rich." Not quite. If the value of Temple assets is allocated among the 913 Temple members who died in Guyana, Temple holdings per person in November of 1978 come to around \$12,000 per person—it is even less if allocated among the total number of Temple members. In effect, Jim Jones forged an organization that was wealthier than the sum of its parts. But they were hardly rich, given their size and radical orientation, and their precarious and unknown future.

THE CORPORATION OF PEOPLE

In essence, all the capital was for a single cause, bankrolling Peoples Temple as an extended family that was becoming an ark of survival. In turn, the Temple would provide for individual wants on a communal basis.

At the most basic level, there was a communistic redistribution of resources, including labor of members. When one couple found they needed a new septic system leach line, Temple men did the work in a day (Mills, 1979: 132). One time a woman couldn't meet her rent payment and the Temple came up with the money. Peoples Temple publicly offered services to the needy, from doing laundry and ironing, to picking up groceries. The Temple's care home operators were responsible for arranging medical care for their clients, and they

often would rely on the skilled professionals who were Temple members.

In fact, the drive toward group provision of services to members inspired Peoples Temple's college tuition and dormitories program, established by 1971 at Santa Rosa Community College. There Temple youth were sent to gain a practical education that would dovetail into the church's spiraling range of activities (Moore, 1985: 95, 140-1, 240ff.). The Santa Rosa College bank account initiated the structure whereby a communal economy eventually became formalized. The Temple began to lay claim to the incomes of members who "went communal," and in turn, their needs were paid for out of Temple accounts, at first the college one, later, others. For the people who worked their way further and further into the organization, what they called "apostolic socialism" was not a dream. The communal organization of Peoples Temple became their social world.

The care homes provided the household nucleus of the communal system. After the Santa Rosa program was established, non-care home households in Redwood Valley began to follow the same basic "franchising" model, and people began to occupy households in other than nuclear-family patterns. According to an undated proposal developed by a couple, the Temple required from members of the inner core what was sometimes called "the commitment." A tithing of 25% was expected of those who could afford it, and sometimes the amount went as high as 50%. Less financially capable members could make up the difference through organizing bake sales and other money-makers (Kilduff and Tracy, 1978). Sometimes one family member worked full time for the Temple without compensation and another would still contribute 25% from an outside job (Thielmann and Merrill, 1979: 71).

The Temple took this approach even further in San Francisco, when the communal organization expanded rapidly beginning in the winter of 1975. Basically, the scheme was similar to one described in a memorandum titled, "Should People's Temple adopt a share-all economic plan?" The author proposed that each individual "hold the best job commensurate with his capacity," "assign over each payday his paycheck . . . with no strings attached (to try to avoid registration under the Securities Act)," "give all his personal and real property to the church with no strings attached," and "submit a proposed budget as to his needs. . . ."

Those who "went communal" would fill out an application listing their living arrangements and financial data, including sources of income, savings accounts, cash value of life insurance, and real properties. People who entered into this sort of arrangement described it in matter-of-fact terms: "We were communal, and we would cash our check. It was a process of donating our money," recalled one member who survived the mass suicide.

There came to be at least 19, and perhaps as many as 70 different communal households in San Francisco, plus people living in the Temple church building itself. Substantial numbers of elderly "went communal" under a "life care" agreement like those used in contemporary profit and non-profit nursing homes. Peoples Temple offered to take care of an elderly person for life, in exchange for donations of between \$30,000 and \$40,000 (Moore, 1985: 353ff.). Wrote one woman to Jones: "I have no indebtedness on anything or am I buying anything with the taxes to come up which or [sic] now paid and Just Utility Bills with me and eat out of \$117.65 a month I would not fare so well alone I do better living communal as I am now doing."

Many "seniors" simply signed over their social security checks to Peoples Temple, a practice that eventually fueled charges by opponents. But in March of 1979, the U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare reported "no basis has been found for concluding that the Peoples Temple stole or fraudulently used social security benefits received by its members." A judgment that the life care agreements were *bona fide* came after the mass suicides, when 110 aged former Temple members made effective claims against Temple receiver Robert Fabian's assets on the basis of their donations, a transaction that underscores the *bona fide* character of the "life care" agreements.

Not only did those who went communal give over income, they also handed over real estate, insurance policies, and other items of value. The Temple practiced a sort of "spoils communism" (Weber, 1977: 243ff., 1119-20), taking whatever resources came in, and either converting them to the use of the group or selling them. Thus Temple members would work to fix up cars, furniture, rummage items and houses in preparation for selling them.

Real estate was of enough concern by 1974 that the Temple's articles of incorporation were amended specifically to permit real estate transactions to further the primary purposes of the church as a non-profit religious organization. A special checking account for Valley Enterprises established an "alter ego" to shield the Temple's involvement in property rehabilitation, both to avoid the suspicions of outsiders in Mendocino County and to provide a "front" in case of Internal Revenue Service investigation. But the number of transactions was not very great; even by the time most people had migrated to Jonestown in August of 1977, reporters could find only fifteen properties that had been given to the Temple and sold, for approximately \$667,000. Other properties, the Temple bought as a corporation, either for care homes or communal residences, and these too were sold to liquidate the organization's assets in the U.S.

Once real estate and other donations were processed, they were not considered refundable. But the Temple did not always obtain people's complete financial resources, even if they "went communal." As one survivor put it, "I was never under the impression that once you made a donation, you could ever get it back. But I believed I was free to leave with whatever money I didn't turn over." For anyone who decided to hold on to some property so long as he or she were alive, a Temple lawyer could draw up a "last will and testament."

For those who made "the commitment"—the seniors, as well as younger people who tithed—consumption was collectivized, and the net savings due to economies of scale were cycled back into the Temple (cf. Hall, 1978: 120ff.). Like many features of Temple life, collectivist consumption began in small ways, with the limiting of consumption for birthdays, by buying a small number of presents communally, and holding only one party a month. The logical extension of this approach eventually would have communal Temple members receiving minuscule allowances of \$2 per week. If they wanted something not covered by the allowances and the food, clothing and other resources they received directly from the Temple, individuals would have to submit a "needs envelope" to the Temple "Needs Department."

Personal wants thus were subordinated to the collectivity, even while the Temple outwardly operated a church. Even so, the Temple was providing what the Internal Revenue Service terms "private benefits" to individuals, a violation of tax codes presumably designed to prevent embezzlement and fraud. The attempted Temple solution to the problem of providing private benefits was the "Apostolic Corporation," a legal entity created in February of 1976 to hold the communal wealth of Temple members. Here, Temple hopes rested on establishing the tax-exempt status of the corporation as a religious communal group under section 501(d) of the IRS tax code. By March of 1977, however, the IRS denied tax-exempt status. The Apostolic Corporation, it held, was not designed to be "internally self-sustaining by virtue of agriculture or other small businesses." The decision by the IRS in early 1977 came at a time when Temple staff already were concerned that they were being investigated by the Treasury Department for tax evasion based on failing to pay taxes on the "unrelated business income" of nursing home profits. It was these concerns with keeping the IRS from confiscating "black people's money," rather than forthcoming negative publicity from apostates, that precipitated the long-planned Temple migration to the Promised Land in Guyana.

CONCLUSION

Given that Peoples Temple existed in the midst of a money economy stimulated through advertising of "the American dream," it must have been difficult for members to undergo the transition to communalism. Detractors eventually would apply the standards of a conventional church to argue that the rates of tithing and donation of labor to the Temple were excessive, and the control of consumption, arbitrary; they would even complain about the lack of standard business practices to prevent graft, such as the tendering of receipts to account for expenditures. But such protestations ignore the communal nature of the "church"; if the journal of one woman is an indication, members committed to a communal lifestyle found the "needs" system neither objectionable nor unduly limiting. One of her journal entries records the woman's satisfaction when the needs envelope came back with money for everything she requested—\$30 for clothes and \$11 for a MUNI public transportation pass.

The Temple was neither fish nor fowl. Though it gave the external appearance of an unusual, but nevertheless conventionally organized religious congregation, the communal commitments made it something quite different. Peoples Temple became what Lewis Coser (1974: 4) has called a "greedy institution"—a group in which "demands on the individual are omnivorous." In totally communal organizations, undivided commitments are not unusual: individuals often earn no income and sometimes do not even receive allowances. But in the modern secular world, people tend to wend their ways among diverse, overlapping and sometimes conflicting commitments. By embarking on a communalist course while remaining a church, and without establishing a strong physical boundary between the group and the outside, Peoples Temple became "greedy" in precisely the way that would create the greatest conflict with the outside world.

No doubt the communal transition of Peoples Temple caused the organization a good deal of its eventual difficulties, for detractors could claim that a supposed church had subjected people to extortion and false imprisonment. But it must be recognized that the increased demands for tithing that marked "the commitment" were not simply the effort of a normal church to increase its "margin of profit." The resource mobilization from diverse activities was the income side of a communally restructured equation of the relation between a church and its members. For those who were committed to the organization, the sacrifice of "an indulgent lifestyle," the long hours of work without pay, and the shift toward communalism were not in principle problematic. Instead, they represent the lifestyle often adopted by people who devote their undivided loyalties to a cause they deem just. The results were significant. Because Temple members often were willing to meet the wider standards of communal religious commitment, working long hours without material compensation, the group had a competitive edge in the marketplace of social service vendors. When asked to explain the group's success, Jim Jones reflected, "I don't honestly know how we got where we are. Hard work, I guess. We are very frugal, and we don't have any paid staff."

In the California years, Peoples Temple moved far beyond the realm of care home vendors. It took the peculiar form of a communal organization loosely coupled to a wider range of social service organizations. The Temple handled cases on a large scale to mobilize the resources due its clients, and it began to treat all members as "cases" to "front" to the outside world of bureaucracies.

Typically, relatively powerless individuals, especially, those on welfare, confront bureaucratic demands on their own. With Peoples Temple, they could counter corporations and the State with their *own* bureaucracy that could create and process data for members in much the same manner as other bureaucracies, but with more of a personal touch. Seemingly without self-conscious intent, Peoples Temple stumbled upon the form of a socialist community

bureaucracy. To consolidate its own authority, the Temple sought power-of-attorney options to represent its members, and it became, in effect, the clients' counterpart to the array of state welfare and other bureaucracies designed to process individual cases. For those who made the communal commitment, the Temple offered the services of a personal tax consultant, lawyer, and social worker—a sort of diversified, collectivized H&R Block.

There were significant consequences. By handling cases on a collective basis, Peoples Temple achieved similar economies of scale to those of state bureaucracies; individuals were thereby freed up from deferring to the often confusing and conflicting demands of external authorities. It might even be argued that Peoples Temple offered one solution to the widely recognized problem of alienation. To some degree, alienation in modern societies is held to stem from the tendency by bureaucracies toward "one-dimensional" treatment of persons as things (Marcuse, 1964). The Temple short-circuited that alienation by establishing an advocate organization that would negotiate the twists and turns of the bureaucratic world. While the individual received relief from the often degrading experience of being "processed," the Temple gained both time and money by serving as a welfare rights organization that specialized in the collective management of individual identity.

Clearly, Peoples Temple represented "unfair" competition in the world of modern welfare bureaucracy. In somewhat the same way that the productivity of industrial capitalism depended at its inception on the Protestant work ethic, so Peoples Temple thrived on a "social work" ethic that was connected to a radical redefinition of the relation of individuals to bureaucracy in the modern world. Previously, only the State and corporations had subjected individuals to such thorough-going rational organization. To the degree that churches and social movements had been rationally organized, they focused on collective pursuits rather than individual ones. Now, people who were treated in the language of the State and corporations as clients and consumers became rationally organized as members of Peoples Temple.

Thus, the mobilization of resources in Peoples Temple was but half of the equation of its economy, and it is an incomplete basis upon which to understand the Temple's economic successes. Despite the apocalyptic and world-transforming orientation in the group, or more precisely, because of it, Temple staff were able to exhort followers to maximize donations. This was possible at the level it occurred only because the Temple offered substantial benefits in return—a communal ark of salvation that not only provided for members' personal needs, but also "fronted" for them in the complex array of Social Security and other welfare bureaucracies. That members had invested so much—often their life savings—in the Temple as their whole future represents one basis for that group's effective charismatic claim on their allegiance even in the face of zealous opposition, even to the point of mass suicide. If the Temple is anything of a harbinger of things to come, someday the computers of bureaucratic organizations representing legions of citizens will interface with computers of the State and corporations, trading the matrices of personal information needed for adjudication of cases. The work of managing the common person's identity in a bureaucratic world will have become a business itself. Come what may in that regard, it is doubtful such organizations will take the form of a charismatic bureaucracy like their communal precursor, Peoples Temple.

REFERENCES

- Beckford, James A. 1985. *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to New Religious Movements*. London: Tavistock.
- Benson, J. Kenneth. 1975. "The Interorganizational Network as a Political Economy." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 20: 229-249.

- Bromley, David G. 1988. "Economic Structure and Charismatic Leadership in the Unificationist Movement." In J. T. Richardson (ed.), *Money and Power in the New Religions*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- _____, and Anson D. Shupe, Jr. 1980. "Financing the New Religions: A Resource Mobilization Approach." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19: 227-39.
- Chu, Franklin, D., and Sharland Trotter. 1974. *The Madness Establishment: Ralph Nadar's Study Group Report on the National Institute of Mental Health*. New York: Grossman.
- Coser, Lewis A. 1974. *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment*. New York: Free Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1965 [1961]. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. New York: Random House.
- Hadden, Jeffrey K., and Charles Swann. 1981. *Prime Time Preachers*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hall, John R. 1978. *The Ways Out: Utopian Communal Groups in an Age of Babylon*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- _____. 1987. *Gone from the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- _____. 1988. "Social Organization and Pathways of Commitment: Ideal Types, Rational Choice Theory, and the Kanter Thesis." *American Sociological Review* (forthcoming).
- Harrison, Paul. 1969. *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hilke, John C. 1980. "Voluntary Contributions and Monitoring Efforts: Revealed Preference for the Services of Religious Organizations." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19: 138-45.
- Kanter, Rosabeth. 1972. *Commitment and Community*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Kilduff, Marshall, and Phil Tracy. 1977. "Inside Peoples Temple." *New West*. 8/1/77.
- Khalsa, Kirpal Singh. 1986. "New Religious Movements Turn to Worldly Success." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25: 233-47.
- McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization in Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 82: 1212-39.
- Mills, Jeannie. 1979. *Six Years with God: Life Inside Jim Jones's Peoples Temple*. New York: A&W Publishers.
- Moore, Rebecca. 1985. *A Sympathetic History of Jonestown: The Moore Family Involvement in the Peoples Temple*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Paris, Arthur E. 1982. *Black Pentecostalism: Southern Religion in an Urban World*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Richardson, James T. 1982. "Financing the New Religions: Comparative and Theoretical Considerations." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21: 255-68.
- Robbins, Thomas, and Roland Robertson. 1987. *Church-State Relations: Tension and Transitions*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Rochford, E. Burke. 1985. *Hare Krishna in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Segal, Steven P., and Uri Aviram. 1978. *The Mentally Ill in Community-Based Sheltered Care: A Study of Community Care and Social Integration*. New York: John Wiley.
- Shupe, Anson, and David Bromley. 1986. "Rebottling the Elixir: The Gospel of Prosperity in America's Quasi-religious Corporations." Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Washington, DC.
- Thielmann, Bonnie, and Dean Merrill. 1979. *The Broken God*. Elgin, IL: David Cook.
- Weber, Max. 1958. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Scribner's.
- _____. 1977. *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weisbrot, Robert. 1983. *Father Divine and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.