

LETTER TO ALL U.S. CONGRESSMEN - from a private individual (member)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

You may have heard of my minister, Rev. Jim Jones, and our church, Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ. For nearly 30 years, Rev. Jones has worked tirelessly for the cause of racial harmony, equality of opportunity, and justice, with many successes. Many thousands of people have been helped through his ministry. He has been widely regarded as an outstanding humanitarian and progressive religious leader.

Several years ago he began an agricultural mission in the Caribbean nation of Guyana, a newly-independent country. Several thousand acres were allotted to the church, and today, the project is a model of what can be done by ordinary people working together for a constructive purpose. The project has grown into a community of nearly 1000 people, and is producing a variety of foodstuffs. ~~xxxxxxx~~ A thriving livestock division, outstanding medical services to the region, and complete educational programs have also been developed. Though the primary aim of the mission has been (and still is) to help this new nation in reaching its goals of feeding, clothing, and housing its population, and developing its rich hinterland, the project established by Rev. Jones has proven a tremendous success in providing a wholesome, natural environment for many young people who have ~~gone~~ gone to live there with their families and who, in the inner cities of the United States, were facing serious difficulties, as you can well understand, in the slums. Many were already involved in various forms of crime and drug abuse, and other types of anti-social and self-destructive behavior.

The youth crime and unemployment problems of the urban areas of the nation have admittedly reached crisis proportions. Labor ~~xxxxxxx~~ leader George Meany recently remarked on the ~~incalculable~~ incalculable amount of social disruption that will accrue ~~xxxxxxx~~ from millions of people being unable to find jobs, especially in areas where they have received some training. Solutions are desperately needed. We are encouraged by the fact that many young people who have come to reside in our community in Guyana have undergone remarkable, fundamental changes in character and outlook, and have developed maturity, responsibility, a sense of self-worth, and valuable skills. What's more, they feel that they are living a meaningful life. They have a future; they don't need to preoccupy themselves with escaping from an intolerable present. They are identifying with the aspirations of much of humanity for a decent life, and are able to accomplish something in that direction -- something concrete, practical. This is, of course, of great value to anyone. The extremely successful program ~~xxxx~~ has not only had a most beneficial and positive effect on the young people involved, as well as on the host country; it has not only been a most positive sign that we can find ways to attack the youth/crime/unemployment crisis (remember, too, that we have no government funds or grants), but it has saved the cities ~~xx~~ untold amounts of money. Even the 200 or so young people we have ~~xxxx~~ at the mission community, had they remained "on the streets," would have cost the taxpayers money in the form of stolen goods, vandalized property, welfare, money needed for law enforcement, criminal court and detention costs, drug rehabilitation programs, and the like. The problems, incidently, were compounded by some troublemakers within our church who were actually, as we have found, endeavoring to frustrate our work, and even encouraged and provoked young people in our church community to antisocial, irresponsible, and 'militant' behavior that they wouldn't have otherwise undertaken. ~~xxxxxxx~~ They Guyana mission community has experienced no crime or antisocial behavior, which is quite remarkable, given the

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fact that disciplinary measures ~~xxxx~~ are confined to talking out problems with counselors, in a rational context.

In addition to the youth, some 250 senior citizens, many from poverty-stricken backgrounds, have gone to the project's lovely retirement center where they are well-cared for. They are receiving the best of medical care and nutrition. They do not have to feel lonely, neglected, fearful of harm. Interestingly, they are not receiving SSI, welfare, Medicare or other money (except for retirement pensions) ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~; this represents a substantial saving for the taxpayers.

Rev. Jim Jones was one of the first to come to the community to reside, and most everyone else went there afterwards. The people who went did so out of their own free will, and at the encouraging of a religious leader whose character they obviously esteemed -- otherwise they would not have made the journey of many thousands of miles. I say this because of the attacks that have been made on Rev. Jones, mostly confined to the San Francisco area. The press portrayals have been part of a deliberate campaign, and have wholly misrepresented him and his work. Many of us feel that they have been engendered and sponsored by persons who felt that Rev. Jones and his church constitute some kind of 'threat' or 'menace' to society. This we see as particularly tragic, since we have assuredly been a (as many civic, religious, and business leaders have recognized) a force for positive solutions to social problems that we are all concerned with, no matter what our particular political philosophy: crime, drugs, poverty, unemployment, welfaristic solutions that don't seem to work, Federal programs that are wasteful, erosion of morals, breakdown of family structures. These have touched all of our lives in one way or another. It has always been a policy of Rev. Jones to "light candles" rather than to "curse the darkness." We have been able, through his leadership and hard work, to open up some avenues that can help overcome some of these problem areas, in the context of a church group that works as a kind of large family, stressing constructive behavior, clean living, family loyalty, self-reliance, a wholesome moral structure, and concern for the individual. For years we have tried to preserve America's institutions, its idealism, championing its practical spirit of voluntarism against those who have urged irresponsible courses of action. We are sorry that some who have had the wrong idea have been able to use their influence to cause us to be harassed by several government agencies. Even so, we have kept our perspective, and remain loyal to our democratic process as the most effective and fair means devised to govern people -- contrary to what some have alleged about us.

Proof of this is in the literally thousands of amateur radio contacts that our mission in Guyana has made with operators all over the United States in recent days alone, building good will and fostering a spirit of harmony and co-operation. The work of Peoples Temple in Guyana has had the effect of counteracting the hated 'yankee' stereotype that has been an impediment for so long to progress in U.S.-Caribbean relations. Hopefully, by showing the constructive, helpful qualities of the American spirit here in a foreign nation, we will be ~~xxxx~~ doing our country and Hemispheric relations a service, easing tensions and helping to heal old wounds, overcoming misunderstandings. I couldn't begin to assess the tremendous amount of good will that has been engendered by the presence and the practical accomplishments of Rev. Jones and his community of Americans in Guyana. We are providing you with a list of Amateur Radio operators in the United States who can verify our efforts at building good will -- every night the mission team is on the band for several hours in what they regard as a duty and a pleasure. Already, the medical amateur radio "net" (MARCO) has helped out our medical clinic

and staff with specialist advice.

I wanted to set the record straight about a couple of matters that have been terribly misportrayed about Rev. Jones and his church. First of all, the custody matter involving Rev. Jones' son is being handled in the Guyana courts. Since the issue is between American citizens, the State Department has rightfully and appropriately taken a position of neutrality, despite efforts to use them to prejudice the outcome of the case. Rev. Jones did not "have to" leave the U.S. because of the situation with his child: he had ~~2~~ full custody long before he left for Guyana last year.

Also, though many members of his congregation (and others not in his church) have decided ~~to~~ (freely) to follow him to reside in the church community in Guyana, many more have chosen to remain in the States (here), and none has been made to feel the slightest bit uncomfortable about their choice.

Thirdly, though Rev. Jones has served on occasion in local governmental posts, out of humanitarian and moral concerns, and a sense of responsibility and public service that I am sure you both understand and share, he has no "political" ambitions whatsoever. He has been ~~here~~ in Guyana working on the farm project for over eight months, and very happily so. As far as his politics go, he has little faith or respect for mere "labels" -- Jim Jones is somewhat of an independent and has found people who talk 'radical' to be often the least supportive or understanding of his work, while finding some of his strongest support among people who are supposed to ~~be~~ be 'moderates,' or 'conservatives.' Beyond the labels is some basic humanitarian concern that can be found in many areas of the so-called political 'spectrum.' He even remarked about a position he took on ~~at~~ the San Francisco Housing Commission, that it was "the worst decision I made in my life." He is content to do the kind of humanitarian work he is engaged in now, and which has formed the ~~the~~ great part of his work as a minister. He is no political opportunist or status-seeker, as anyone who has worked with him or around him knows full well.

Finally, though the Guyana project has been enormously successful in the areas outlined above, none of us see such success as indicating any kind of ready-made solution or formula or panacea. ~~Not~~ should it be. We ~~are~~ happy to have been able to relieve the pain and suffering of a number of people whose lives ~~have been~~ were being wasted, and who, today, have something meaningful to do, to live for. That's a great reward.

Any comments or suggestions you may have about what we are doing would be welcome. I hope that this letter might provide some encouragement for you in your work. The power of ordinary people working together, sharing ideas and talents in a co-operative, community way...that's a great part of the American experience that, unfortunately, is being lost in the impersonality of mass-society. This old-fashioned spirit of helpfulness and neighborliness may be that untapped resource in the American people which, if we can only somehow foster and encourage it, will do more than all ~~the~~ of the programs and schemes that have still God's help not gotten to the heart of what's ailing our great nation. It is in this spirit of concern for finding constructive solutions that our church and our pastor carry on the work, and we trust it will be in such a spirit that it will be understood.

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told us about. Idea that these  
people are being dignified.