

MEETING HELD WITH THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

On Monday October 17, 1977 Comrade Minister of State, Region 1 and his Regional Development Officer met representatives of the People's Temple Agricultural Project. Representatives of that Organisation were -

Comrades Johnny Jones
Ava Jones
Anita Kelly
Les Ingram
Sharon Amos
Carolyn Seston

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss relations between the People's Temple and the rest of the Sub-Region.

Comrade Minister alluded to the original understanding between the Regional Administration and the People's Temple underlying the latter's settlement in the Kaituma area. That understanding was that the Settlement would be integrated with the rest of the Kaituma community. Their activities had started in this way. People from Kaituma had gone to work at Jonestown and impart their knowledge of local agricultural practices. Later the People's Temple had dispensed with those persons' services. Now there was no member of the Kaituma community employed with the People's Temple. He considered that this was not in keeping with the spirit of integration. It was his wish that the position be corrected. To this end it was proposed that the People's Temple accept groups of Guyanese, about twenty (20) at a time, to work with the Jonestown community and participate in farming and other activities. The Guyanese would, in this way, be learning the industry, organisation and discipline of the Temple's community which had shown considerable progress. Since members of the community were not paid for their work the Guyanese would not be expected to be paid.

The representatives of the People's Temple said they would have to take this proposal back for consideration of the members as a whole. In the meantime they offered the Kaituma community the services of their medical personnel on one (1) day a week in the Fort area. Their "Water Diviner" was also available to the community to identify the location of ground water as they had done at Jonestown.

Comrade Minister then referred to the schooling of children of the Settlement. It was desirable, he said, that the education of these children be integrated with that provided by the State. The Community School at Kaituma provided education from Nursery to Secondary levels. He had observed that there were hundreds of children at Jonestown. These children should be sent to the Kaituma school. There was accommodation for about two hundred (200) children at the Secondary level and others at other levels.

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He was aware that the Temple was conducting its own school. However, education and the establishment and conduct of schools in Guyana were governed by Guyana legislation and it was necessary that there be compliance with the relevant legislation. He was not aware that the school at the People's Temple Project was in compliance with the law.

The representatives of the People's Temple explained that the children at the Settlement had a background of persecution, and had been generally disadvantaged, in their native communities. They had come recently into a new and congenial situation at Jonestown. It would be traumatic to so soon remove them to another strange school environment and away from the people they know and had come to trust. In addition there would be the problem of transport between Port Kaituma and the Project.

They were informed that transportation of children at the Secondary level would be four times per term, at the beginning and end of term and at mid-term when they were allowed to go home on holiday for a week-end.

The Temple saw this as yet another difficulty, since the children were required to participate in an ongoing programme of orientation. Living away all term would interfere with this.

They were informed that consideration might be given to concessions as follows -

- i) in the beginning some children less likely to suffer from the change might be selected to attend the Kaituma school;
- ii) they might be permitted to go home at week-ends during the early period; and
- iii) members of the Temple might visit them at pre-arranged periods during the term;

Again the representatives of the People's Temple wished to discuss these proposals with other members. In the meantime they were offering the services of persons knowledgeable in arts and crafts to teach part-time at the school.

Comrade Minister informed them that since the term was already advanced an early decision was desired.

At the request of the representatives of the People's Temple Comrade Minister explained the procedure for becoming members of the Peoples' National Congress.

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