

PEOPLES TEMPLE of the Disciples of Christ

P.O. Box 893 Georgetown, Guyana

February 12, 1978

Mr. Joseph Freitas
District Attorney
Hall of Justice
850 Bryant Street
San Francisco, CA 94111

Dear Mr. Freitas:

It has come to our attention that Tim Stoen has attempted to persuade you to use your influence regarding a custody dispute between him and members of Peoples Temple. The matter is being adjudicated by the Guyana court system, and we maintain that it would be unethical were any pressure or influence exercised on behalf of either of the parties in the dispute. It is for this reason that we ask you to resist any attempts by Mr. Stoen or others representing him to induce you or members of your staff to interfere in the determination of this private matter.

We have recently spoken with representatives from the U.S. State Department and the American Embassy in Guyana. They have insisted that their position is one of total neutrality. Nevertheless, Mr. Stoen has attempted to influence them to exert pressure on behalf of him and his wife. He has even gone so far as to accuse members of Peoples Temple of crimes which he later admitted to U.S. officials were never committed.

You are no doubt aware of the background and circumstances in the case. If not, we refer you to Herb Caen's column of a few weeks ago. We are sure that after reading this material you will not wish to take a position in the matter. There are other factors in the case of which you may not be aware that would make it especially inappropriate for your office to attempt in any way to prejudice the Guyana court system. For one thing, Tim Stoen was openly insulting and condescending to local officials, stating that he did not trust the Guyanese to handle the matter fairly, behaving in a manner most unbecoming -- indeed, arrogant -- to anyone visiting a third world nation. Though unsuccessful, he was very likely (and still may be) attempting to provoke an international incident over the matter.

It is not for us to reflect here on what may be Mr. Stoen's motivations, except to say that they are assuredly less than honorable, and should he be successful in enlisting your aid in his dubious cause, it would -- needless to say -- reflect poorly on the integrity of your office which, to date, has shown itself totally impartial and above-board in its handling of the entire Peoples Temple matter.

I am asking that our office in San Francisco enclose with my letter some material about the community here, which has been very highly praised by all who have visited as a model of co-operative living and constructive development. We are thoroughly fed up with the despicable attempts to portray this community in some quarters of the press as some type of dismal 'hard-labor' camp; this has been done to provide a 'cover' for the kind of schemes which Tim Stoen and others have been pursuing. It amounts to a **BR-10-1-6**

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To: Mr. F. I. tas
From: Richard D. Tropp

tragic and cruel exercise that has almost made us ashamed of our many stands for press freedom. We are especially sorry about Tim, who for several years appeared to do an outstanding job on behalf of the people we serve, but who is evidently under some kind of pressure or fear for his professional reputation -- we don't profess to understand the complexity of the forces and the personal morass that have caused him to participate in a desperate and reprehensible scheme, and to enlist the help of others in positions of responsibility.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have, and are confident that your office will continue to act with fairness, impartiality, and a high regard for justice.

Sincerely yours,

RICHARD D. TROPP
Assistant to Rev.
Jim Jones

Enclosures

1. "Notes From the Last Frontier" (an article to be submitted for publication in Santa Rosa)
2. "The Meaning of the Peoples Temple 'Expose': A Viewpoint (an open letter to New West magazine and the San Francisco Examiner)

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