

IAPA NEWS



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Church donation aids fight for press freedom

The Inter American Press Association, we all know, operates strictly on dues paid by members and does not solicit outside contributions for its main task of defending and promoting freedom of information in the Americas. Recently, however, we received an unsolicited contribution that moved us deeply. We accepted it with gratitude and full appreciation of the high principles that moved the donors.

The donation of \$250 came from the congregation of the Peoples Temple Christian Church, of Redwood Valley, California, whose pastor, the Reverend James W. Jones, has sparked a campaign in defense of the First Amendment to the constitution.

"We believe," wrote James E. Pugh, in behalf of the Board of Elders, "that the American way of life is being threatened by the recent jailings of news reporters for refusal to reveal their sources. As a church, we feel a responsibility to defend the free speech clause of the First Amendment, for without it America will have lost freedom of conscience and the climate will become ripe for totalitarianism."

The elders voted the donation after hearing the Rev. Jones read "to an overflow congregation" excerpts from a report on the state of the press in the U.S. made by Brady Black, editor of The Cincinnati Enquirer and regional vice chairman of the IAPA's Committee on

Freedom of the Press, at the IAPA's annual meeting last October in Chile. "Mr. Black," the covering letter said, "gave a lucid and convincing account of developments in our country constituting a threat to the people's right to know." The letter was addressed to Francis Dale, Publisher of The Enquirer.

Mr. Pugh reported that a grand total of \$4,400 had been contributed by the congregation, made up of "ordinary working people of all backgrounds," for the defense of William Parr and other reporters jailed for refusing to reveal their sources of information.

"No acknowledgment for this contribution is necessary," wrote Mr. Pugh. "We wish simply to demonstrate . . . that there are churches and other groups in society which are not connected with the institutional press who do indeed care about this threat to freedom of speech, press and conscience."

He said the donation was "to be used as you see fit in defense of a free press."

The Peoples Temple Christian Church, under the Rev. Jones does not only take a stand on constitutional rights. The church also has established a drug rehabilitation program, two convalescent homes, a 40-acre home for mentally retarded boys, three senior citizen's homes and an animal shelter.

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