

\$10 Million Yearly Goes Into Economy

Pasadena Ponders Effect If World Church Leaves

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With the financial future of the Worldwide Church of God in doubt, many Pasadena civic leaders are worrying about the economic impact on the city if the church moves away.

The controversy surrounding the institution has obscured the fact that the church pumps millions of dollars annually into the city's economy and is a major downtown employer in the city of 100,000.

Herbert W. Armstrong, founder and leader of the controversial fundamentalist church, has threatened to take the church, the missionary foundation and its college, to Tucson, Ariz., away from what he considers to be troublesome California authorities.

Armstrong's threat to move the church came after a judge placed it into receivership when the state attorney general charged that some church officials, including Armstrong, had been mishandling funds. The church is now seeking to overturn the receivership order.

If the church and its related businesses move out, the loss could leave Pasadena in a financial lurch.

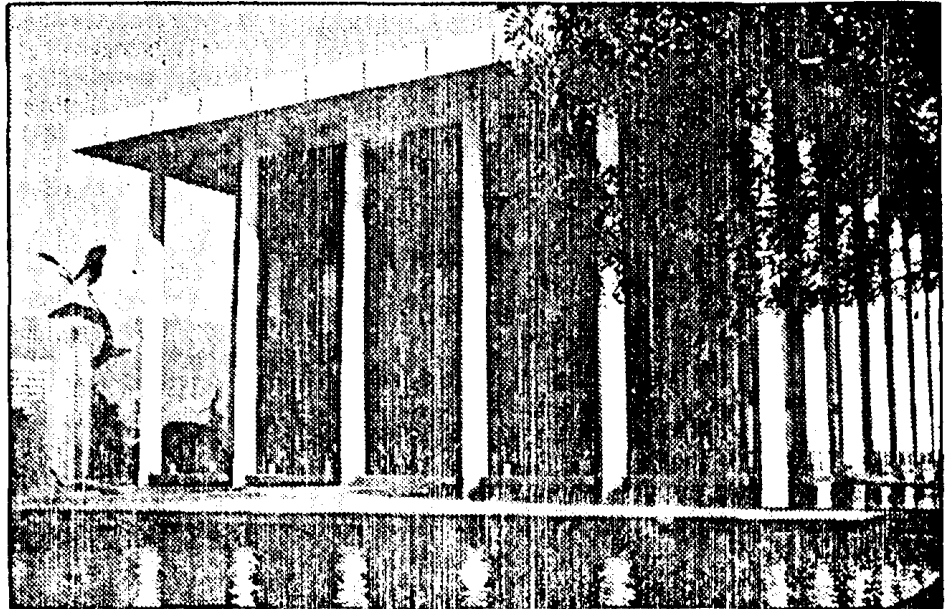
"Ambassador College is one of the major taxpayers in the city and loss of income and revenue would be unfortunate and detrimental to city government," said William Bogaard, member of the Pasadena Board of City Directors.

The embattled church pumps an estimated \$10 million into Pasadena's economy each year through salaries, taxes and supplies purchased from local merchants. Business leaders in the foothill community say they cannot estimate how many millions of dollars in related services the church has drawn to the area.

A church-owned and -operated data-processing center is considered to be one of Southern California's finest. The church's system is so efficient that the city of Pasadena uses it to store some of its records.

A printing plant where two monthly magazines and a weekly newspaper are published and a television studio where the syndicated program "The World Tomorrow" is produced compose another part of the Armstrong empire in Pasadena.

The church also owns 150 to 200



Ambassador College Auditorium has become a major cultural landmark.



The church owns at least 150 residences such as this in area around the campus.

parcels of prime residential property in the Orange Grove Avenue area surrounding the 40-acre Ambassador College campus. Average value of homes in the elegant turn-of-the-century neighborhood is \$150,000.

The Worldwide Church Foundation also has tried to speculate in Pasadena real estate. When the federal government wanted to unload the Vista del Arroyo Hotel, a 200-room gothic structure used as an Army hospital during World War II, the Worldwide Church offered to purchase the building and change it into a dormitory

It wasn't until public opposition to the sale became vocal that the government decided not to sell the building to the church for \$1.

"To say Pasadena and Herbert Armstrong have become more than cozy companions is to say it mildly," said a Pasadena City Hall staffer.

Now Chamber of Commerce officials are worried that the departure of the church would dump 700 college and foundation employees into the job market.

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CHURCH

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"We can't keep our heads in the sand about this," said Rolfe Arnhym, executive director of the Pasadena Chamber of Commerce. "We have a committee set up within the chamber that would quickly help in keeping the continuity of employment. They represent a sizable number of tens of people who work in our downtown, and we would hate to see something like that happen."

"We hope the church doesn't leave. They have been a good and valued neighbor in this community," Arnhym said.

When Herbert Armstrong decided 20 years ago to direct his empire from Pasadena, he began purchasing property on the western border of downtown Pasadena. One city official characterized the area as being "tacky and run down" when Armstrong entered the picture.

Using contributions from church followers, Armstrong, his now ex-

communicated son, Garner Ted; and attorney Stanley Rader built a modern 40-acre college campus complete with an acoustically perfect performing arts auditorium and a system of elaborate fountains, all set in a manicured landscaped setting.

"It's a beautiful institution," said architect and Pasadena city board member Mortimer "Tim" Matthews. "They came in and renovated buildings and built new ones. It would be very difficult to find tenants who would keep up the property in the same manner."

Rumors about the fate of the 1,200-student campus if the church does leave have spread throughout Pasadena. Some say administrators at Pasadena City College are eyeing the land as a potential second campus.

Others speculate that USC might buy the show place and use it for extension courses.

"One time I facetiously said we should try and get Garner Ted back to run the school," said Bogaard. "I don't know if he would receive the same financial support as his father did but I understand that he is supposed to be a very inspirational leader."