



"The policy of our paper is very simple — merely to tell the truth."

Paul Poynter, 1875-1950

Nelson Poynter, 1903-1978

editorials

Stay vigilant

For Scientologist Heber Jentzsch to compare attitudes in Pinellas toward his group to the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany, as he did in Clearwater Wednesday, insults the people of this community, members of the Jewish faith and the integrity of history.

Six-million Jews were innocent victims of the Nazis, murdered because of their heritage and because the inhuman prejudices cultivated by the Nazis ultimately required political scapegoats. The victims of the Holocaust did nothing to cause their fate except to exist in that place at that horrible time in history. To compare the Scientologists to them is to trivialize that terrible crime against mankind.

PEOPLE IN Pinellas who are deeply wary of the Scientologists base their feelings not on any religious prejudice but on knowledge of the unethical and criminal conduct of many persons who were members, leaders or employees of that group.

On Oct. 18, 1967, Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard declared in writing that any persons deemed enemies of the church "may be tricked, sued or lied to, or destroyed." This doctrine of underhanded tactics was called the church's "fair game" policy.

It has been practiced repeatedly in Pinellas since the arrival of Scientologists in 1975 falsely calling themselves United Churches of Florida and Southern Land Development. The group devised detailed plans to infiltrate local institutions. The church placed secret agents at the Clearwater Chamber of Commerce, the Clearwater *Sun*, the office of the Pinellas-Pasco state attorney and the office of attorneys representing the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Following the "fair game" doctrine of destroying those it labeled its enemies, the church organized elaborate smear campaigns against then Clearwater Mayor Gabriel Cazares and the husband of a *Times* reporter who exposed their double dealings.

The church unjustly threatened lawsuits. It refused to pay its taxes. It published false ads offering jobs but which actually solicited new members.

In 1979, nine of the highest-ranking mem-

bers of Scientology were convicted in U.S. District Court in Washington of conspiring to infiltrate U.S. government agencies to steal documents.

After the convictions, church officials said such misconduct was a part of the past. They said the church was turning over a new leaf and would prove it with good works. Hubbard issued an order on Dec. 27, 1979, that seemed to repudiate the "fair game" policy. "There is nothing we seek to accomplish," he said, "which cannot be carried out through legal means."

BUT IN 1982 a church lawyer sent a private investigator posing as someone else to gather information on a Clearwater city commissioner. Also in 1982, church-hired investigators posed in Clearwater as agents of a wealthy European. They chartered an 81-foot boat and invited at least five business leaders aboard, apparently in an effort to gather information about them.

According to the sworn statement of a former high church official, the church in 1982 plotted to lure U.S. District Judge Ben Krentzman on a yacht carrying prostitutes and drugs for the purpose of photographing him in a compromising situation. The scheme failed and the church denied the charge.

Is there any wonder that people in Pinellas, who welcome hundreds of religious faiths, are skeptical of both the deeds and words of Scientology leaders?

Of course, the constitutional rights of Scientologists must be protected. Excesses should not be tolerated. The community should oppose any attempts to exploit fears about the church. Because of complaints about the sale of services at prices ranging as high as \$8,000, Clearwater enacted a carefully drawn charitable solicitation and consumer fraud ordinance.

If the church intends to reform itself, it should demonstrate its new attitudes through deeds. False claims of persecution and community insults won't do it. The hard record so far makes it advisable for the people of Pinellas to keep up their guards against continuing unethical behavior.