

YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

# Clearwater Sun

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## A new leaf with old spots

IF THE Scientologists ever adopt a mascot for a symbol of the cult, it should be a leopard.

A leopard never changes its spots, and the Scientologists show no sign of changing theirs.

This is made plain by their most recent action: trying to stop Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney James Russell's current investigation of certain members of the cult.

Russell recently began to subpoena a number of women members to ask them about "criminal matters."

Attorneys for two of the women tried to quash the subpoenas, which are commands by a court for a person to appear and testify or present specific records.

The motion to quash was thrown out by Pinellas Chief Circuit Judge Harry Fogle.

ON THURSDAY, 11 of the Scientologists subpoenaed by Russell asked a federal court in Tampa to block Russell's investigation.

They said it is unconstitutional, is being conducted maliciously and is intended to harass the Scientologists and deprive them of their right to religious freedom.

The court will, we presume, rule one way or the other.

What should be noted is that the Scientologists' response to Russell's investigation is strictly party line.

Years ago, cult founder L. Ron Hubbard told his followers to fight fire with fire.

If someone comes after you, you go after them. They are the enemy.

Jim Russell has long been marked as an enemy of Scientology, and his latest efforts will endear him even less to the Fort Harrison faithful.

NEUTRAL OBSERVERS

may say, "What's so odd about the cult defending itself in this matter? If a newspaper's reporters were subpoenaed, wouldn't the newspaper resist?"

Probably so.

We're not saying the cult shouldn't fight back.

We're just noting that, as they do fight back, the Scientologists are blowing a perfectly good chance to show Clearwater they are serious about their desire to turn over a new leaf and seek a new spirit of friendship and openness.

Russell hasn't charged the Scientology witnesses with any crimes. He is simply asking questions.

But questions are the things Scientologists are most afraid of.

If the cult had nothing to hide, it would not resist Russell's queries.

Instead, it is again trying to wrap the blanket of the First Amendment around the cult's shoulders. "We are a religion," the Scientologists say, "and you are harassing us."

Bilgewater.

Scientology (as we never tire of reminding our faithful readers) is a for-profit scheme that bilks the disaffected, the alienated and dreamers, separating them from huge sums of cash.

The cult cares no more about its members' eternal souls than does the guy who takes your money at the race track bettor's window.

Hubbard knows it, we know it, you know it.

As for Jim Russell, it is not his job to decide if Scientology is a religion. His job is to find out if a crime has been committed, whether by Billy Graham, the Pope or the archangel Gabriel.

And we, for one, wish Russell well in his work.