

YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Clearwater Sun

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The new leaf: how it shrivels

THE GUY who said, "The more things change, the more they stay the same" could well have been speaking of the Scientologists.

Early this year the top officers of the cult promised to mend their ways by calming local waters and being nice to people around here.

The cult then cooked up some ideas about renovating downtown, and they consigned Nancy Reitze to oblivion.

(Nancy, you will recall, was the cult's high priestess of public relations whose brainchild it was to dress up student Scientologists as Nazis and sic 'em on the Clearwater Sun.)

And, wonder of wonders, the cult actually paid some money to the county and city in lieu of back taxes. It wasn't anywhere near what was owed, but every little bit helps.

WELL, THAT'S about as far as Scientology's new leaf got turned over.

Now they are back at the same old stand.

This week, in hallowed Scientology tradition, the cult again applied for tax-exempt status.

The Scientologists are the largest private property holder in the city. They own

were hounding him: "Non illegitimi carborundum." (Don't let those dastardly fellows grind you down.)

THE 1980 PRIZE for hypocrisy should go to the cult for the other move it made this week.

The Scientologists issued a booklet attacking the conviction of nine cult leaders (including Mary Sue Hubbard, the boss's wife) by a federal court in Washington last year.

Several months ago when the verdict was issued the cult made some mealy-mouthed noises about "not condoning wrong-doing" by any Scientologist.

Now, however, even that bit of pseudo-repentance has faded, and the cult has come out with all guns blazing, trying to shoot the presiding judge, Charles R. Richey, right out of his saddle.

This is a new leaf? This is an attempt to pour oil on troubled waters?

The cult says it has mailed the 16-page booklet all over the country. We wonder if the mailing list included the judges who will be considering the appeals entered by the convicted nine Scientologists. There's nothing like letting a judge know what may await him if he votes the wrong way.

\$6.9 million worth of buildings and land, with almost \$154,000 in taxes due for 1979 alone.

That's quite a chunk. But the cult says the buildings are used as parsonages, church administrative offices and as sites of religious services. Therefore, the cult says, the buildings should be tax free.

We question that, and so does county property appraiser Ron Schultz.

He doesn't argue the point of whether or not Scientology is a religion. He lets that question slide, and contends that the cult hasn't proved it is a **non-profit** religion.

And so it goes, down through the years.

We hope Schultz will hang tough and contest the cult's maneuverings, tooth and nail, as he has done in the past.

The motto we must all use is the same one Julius Caesar relied on when the Germans

A FINAL WORD, this one on "Save Sparkling Clearwater," the group that tries to educate the local public about Scientology and all other mind-altering cults, clubs and knothole societies.

S.S.C. needs help in the form of cash and volunteers. The group's greatest enemy is the apathy that threatens to settle in now that thousands of anti-Scientologists have gone public and have survived the experience.

We enter this kind word for S.S.C. not as a blanket endorsement of its specific methods or goals, but rather to show our awareness that right now S.S.C. is about the only outfit in town serving as a rallying point for persons who want to work against evil cults.

If S.S.C. goes under, it may take some doing to crank up a viable replacement for it.