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# Clearwater Sun

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# Milt Wolfe takes the First

IT IS thoroughly proper that State Attorney James Russell and his assistants are pressing onward as hard as they can in an attempt to force local Scientologists to answer pertinent questions.

This week Russell's staff continued to pry answers from the lips of Scientology spokesman Milt Wolfe.

Wolfe replied to some of the investigators' queries, but refused to answer other questions, on the grounds that they violated the First Amendment provisions of freedom of religion.

As we have stated before, Russell is not probing into how the Scientologists practice their so-called religion, at least as far as the cult's members regard questions of the immortal soul and its place in the hereafter.

What concerns Russell is how Scientologists have treated people here on earth, right around Clearwater.

THE STATE attorney has reason to believe that Scientologists have harassed, smeared and plotted against quite a few local citizens and public officials.

He is trying as best he can to find out such mundane

things as who was, and is, in charge of the Scientologists' Guardian Information Bureau in Clearwater.

Wolfe has refused to answer that question. By refusing, he is risking contempt of court. On Thursday, before Circuit Judge John S. Andrews, attorneys will argue whether Wolfe should indeed be found in contempt.

The question of whether Wolfe can hide behind the First Amendment is an important one. It should be settled as soon as possible, and both Russell and Judge Andrews are to be commended for pushing the debate into the open.

EVEN IF Wolfe were a Baptist, a Roman Catholic, an Orthodox Jew or a Buddhist, nowhere in our laws is it written that religion can be used to justify the unlawful treatment of one's fellow man.

What is at issue here is not really religion. It is a question of possible slander, conspiracy, libel, invasion of privacy and (most recently) obstruction of justice.

This is an important battle, worth waging vigorously and well. That it is being fought in such a manner is heartening to the people of Clearwater.