

John E. Ricketson, Publisher

James E. Zimmer, General Manager

Ron Stuart, Editor  
Steve Riesenmy, Managing Editor  
Robert Driver, Editorial Page Editor

W. Paul Harris, Business Manager  
Robert Blackwell, Advertising Director  
Robert Beckie, Circulation Director

# Loose cannon at city hall

AS THE long hot summer of 1980 drags on, the smell of McCarthyism hangs over Clearwater.

It has been generated primarily by City Commissioner Richard Tenney and his partner, Alex Cornell.

The two anti-Scientologists are reacting sharply to a finding by the Florida Commission on Ethics that Tenney may have improperly used his position as a city commissioner for personal gain.

Tenney and Cornell seem to be waving McCarthy tar brushes with both hands.

First they imply that the ethics commission's finding is the result of a Scientology-inspired plot.

Then they hint strongly that certain Clearwater businessmen who testified before the ethics commission are either Scientologists or are "soft" on Scientology.

Tenney says he is sure he will be found guiltless by the ethics commission when it holds public hearings next month.

But just to make sure things go his way, Tenney says he will have his lawyer file an injunction to try to stop the hearings from ever taking place.

This contradictory stance might bother other people, but it apparently doesn't slow down Tenney one whit.

IN THIS controversy, who is winning and who is losing?

Clearwater surely is taking a beating.

It's bad enough that we're the headquarters of the Scientologists; it's worse that the cult's self-professed chief foes are a couple of hot tub salesmen whose off-duty forte has become holding press conferences.

But instead of dispensing news, Cornell and Tenney employ calumny and innuendo in much the same fashion that McCarthy's two stooges, Roy Cohn and G. David Schine, did back in the early 1950s.

Also taking their licks, or their regrets, are a number of local citizens who were unfortunate or unwise enough to come in contact with Tenney and Cornell.

Sadly and ironically, the only sure winners thus far in this brouhaha are the Scientologists. As Clearwater's body politic snarls and bites at itself like a trapped animal, the cult (even with its own troubles) remains strong.

If Tenney survives this latest flap, it will be a brave, nay, foolhardy constituent who attempts to lobby Tenney on any issue, at any time.

Except for rabid anti-cultists—and no one should underestimate the number of them that Tenney has wrapped around his finger—Tenney may find himself shunned.

He has become the loose cannon on the decks of city hall.

6/22/80