

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

Paul Poynter, 1875-1950

Nelson Poynter, 1903-1978

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SUNDAY, JUNE 25, 1978

A look at the record

Public interest ran high when the Church of Scientology 2½ years ago made its secretive entry into Clearwater. And that interest fast turned into public concern. For an informative look at what has been happening since, don't miss the centerpiece in *The Floridian* magazine published as part of this paper today.

Serious allegations about our prominent neighbor are being presented to grand juries in Washington and Tampa by federal prosecutors. Details of those allegations have been placed in the public record in support of the government's inquiry into what, if proven, would be criminal acts.

And that record is fully reviewed in today's *Floridian* article written by reporter Bette Orsini. It includes sworn claims that church officials conspired with secret operatives to commit break-ins, surreptitious entries and thefts in government buildings.

THE ALLEGATIONS, reflecting affidavits filed with the court, of course are still to be weighed not only by the grand jurors but, in event indictments

are brought, by trial juries. Institutions, like individuals, are entitled to a presumption of innocence unless and until proven guilty.

Churches under our form of government enjoy special immunity to government interference except where their affairs spill over into secular matters. Unfortunately, starting with its covert purchase of Clearwater's Fort Harrison Hotel, that spilling over is what has happened in the case of the Scientology church.

WE BELIEVE that Pinellas citizens, without prejudging the charges, at least should be fully aware of what is alleged. That is especially the case in view of the hostile and disturbing policies that the church appears to have proclaimed as governing its dealings with outsiders.

Its "enemies" list, incidentally, is reported to have included Bette Orsini, as a result of her earlier reporting. But it is worth noting that in the *Floridian* piece she makes no charges herself. As usual, she reports from the record.