

OPINION

Analysis, Interpretation and Comment

Is He Crying Wolf?

THE LOCAL Scientologist contingent has not been raided by the FBI, but Clearwater Mayor Gabriel Cazares has leveled another broadside at the cult nonetheless.

Cazares, who never misses an opportunity to zing his foes at the Fort Harrison, has issued a memo titled, "Break-In and Infiltration of Government Facilities."

"Alarming reports about infiltration and theft of government documents," the mayor wrote City Manager Shoemaker, "makes (sic) it imperative that we institute immediate security measures at city hall."

Cazares was referring, of course, to recent FBI raids on Church of Scientology offices in Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles, which reportedly resulted in the recovery of stolen federal documents.

It is ironic that Mr. Cazares should attempt to make political hay out of the supposed need for tighter security at city hall. We distinctly recall that the mayor first took the United Churches of Florida to task for permitting armed, uniformed guards to patrol the former Fort Harrison Hotel. (United Churches later was exposed as a cover organization for the secretive cult.)

With few exceptions, the areas the mayor asked Mr. Shoemaker to investigate normally would not fall under the city manager's jurisdiction. For instance, we see no reason why the administrator should concern himself with whether there is any "re-

course" for an "80-year-old widower...charged almost \$4,000 by the Scientologists for a memory course" or what tax exemptions the cult may enjoy. If hanky-panky were afoot in these areas, the proper authorities undoubtedly would be prepared to deal with them.

As for the mayor's query about the possibility that the Clearwater Police Department has conducted "security or firearms training" for cult members, we grant that is a legitimate concern of city officials. But we also think the mayor should take pains to enlighten Clearwater citizens as to the nature of his suspicions in that regard.

As with other questions, pertaining to the need for safeguarding public records or ensuring that "city hall conference rooms and telephones are not bugged," we sincerely hope that Mr. Cazares has not placed himself in the position of the little boy who cried wolf.

His long-running battle with the Scientologists aside, the mayor must realize that his position dictates certain professional and ethical standards.

If he has grounds for suspecting that a sinister plot has been hatched against city hall, he has a duty to demand the culprits be ferreted out. On the other hand, if it can be shown he merely is attempting to stir up anti-Scientologist sentiment by capitalizing on news stories out of Washington and Los Angeles, the mayor will have a lot of explaining—and apologizing—to do.

Letters