

NEW BLOW FOR CULT'S CHIEF

Scientology leader may be banned

Sunday Express Reporter

MR. JAMES CALLAGHAN, the Home Secretary, is urgently considering whether to ban from Britain Mr. Lafayette Ron Hubbard, American leader of the controversial scientology cult.

This would be a sharp follow-up to the curbs, announced in the Commons on Thursday, on foreigners who belong to the cult entering or remaining in Britain either as staff or students.

Mr. Kenneth Robinson, Minister of Health, told M.P.s: "The Government are satisfied, having reviewed all the available evidence, that scientology is socially harmful.

"It alienates members of families from one another and attributes squalid and disgraceful motives to all who oppose it."

Now all the signs are that Mr. Callaghan is about to exercise his discretionary powers under the Aliens Order to prevent Mr. Hubbard from working for his cult in Britain.

Should Mr. Hubbard be banned, it will be a serious blow to the organisation which claims 16,000 adherents in Britain. It runs three floating "colleges"—boats at sea—and has centres in London and provincial cities.

Recognised

At the moment Mr. Hubbard is believed in Whitehall to be abroad. A decision to ban him would mean that all immigration officers would be instructed not to permit him to return to Britain.

Mr. Hubbard, aged 57, left Saint Hill Manor, the East Grinstead College in Sussex, which is the world headquarters of the sect, some months ago and was reported to have gone abroad.

But a man and a woman who know him well believe they saw him at East Grinstead just over a week ago.

Mrs. Pauline Hall, who lives in a former lodge at the entrance to Saint Hill Manor, said: "I think I recognised him leaving the college in a car which passed my window."

Mr. Ivor Jones, a farmer whose land skirts the college, said: "I think I saw him driving an American-looking sports car near the college. The man I saw had Hubbard's heavy jowls and lips. I think he recognised me too."

Quick look

"It was just a quick look, but I would have put money on it at the time that it was him."

Adherents of the cult in Edinburgh, however, were still in the dark yesterday about their master's whereabouts.

Speaking at the cult's new £16,000 college in the city, blonde 21-year-old "communicator," Madeline Litchfield said: "He could be anywhere in the world."

Nineteen-year-old Laurel Watson, the organisation's public relations officer, also claimed she did not know where "Commodore" Hubbard was.

And she added: "He is a man—a philosopher, a fabulous navigator and an explorer. It suits him to have a ship as his headquarters. We have not heard from him for some time—but we could communicate with him immediately if we thought it necessary. We do not think it necessary just now."

Mr. Hubbard's "flagship" is the 3,280-ton Royal Scotsman, a 350-berth ferry which, until last summer, was used on the Glasgow-Belfast run.