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Scientology suspects barred

Seven Americans, a husband, his wife and their five children, were sent back to the United States from Heathrow yesterday five hours after arriving from New York.

They had told immigration officials that they had come to London to attend a music festival, but their tickets were said to have been made out in the same way as those of scientology students and to have been paid for from the same source.

The man, who described himself as a musician and a student, said at the airport that it was an "unfortunate misunderstanding". The family were put on board a B.O.A.C. jet for New York.

By claiming that they are on holiday, and not here to study, members of the cult may be able to obtain entry in the ordinary way. Immigration officers admit that there is nothing to stop scientologists from studying once they get into Britain. The ban appears to be only on those who admit that they are going to study. The Home Office does not regard the cult as a bona-fide student body, and students would not qualify for entry.

Scientologists said yesterday that they planned to issue writs alleging libel and would appeal to the European Council on Human Rights.

Mr. David Gaiman, speaking at the scientology world headquarters at East Grinstead, Sussex, said: "We cannot say against whom the writs will be issued. They will be served on parties who have reported our activities unfairly and grossly inaccurately.

"We cannot say more as there are no modern precedents for cases of religious persecution. We consider certain reports in daily and Sunday newspapers to be very unfair."

A scientology promotion campaign is to be started in the West Country. An office in Bristol has been set up and the focal point of the campaign will be a lecture held in an hotel next week.