

Scientology: Money keeps rolling in

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The Church of Scientology has amassed vast sums of money during its 23-year history. Bob McKee examines how and where its money comes from.

By BOB MCKEE

Recent years have seen the blossoming of many strange and weird religious cults.

The Church of Scientology may not be among the weirdest of these cults but it certainly must be among the richest.

During the past 20 years L. Ron Hubbard has built up a network of "missions" and through them he has created a multi-national octopus whose tentacles stretch far beyond the limitations of any one country. Hubbard's octopus defies financial analysis.

On a superficial level it's not difficult to see that the organization is in fact, making vast sums of money. Snippets of information, news of new building purchases, and examination of the cost of Hubbard's Scientology courses, help give some idea of the amount of money that's involved.

To attain "total freedom" and the powers that come with Scientology - "processing", you have to climb up a very steep and expensive ladder. Following on from basic Scientology programs, you progress to courses like "Expanded Dianetics Completion", "Power Processing", "Solo Auditors Course", and so on to the "Clearing Course".

Once conquered, the person can then go on to do the OT levels meaning a trip to the church's advanced organizations.

In addition to all this there are many "special" processing programs which any Scientologist may be required to take. They may be inserted at various points within the over-all program depending on what is deemed necessary by the organization. There are many of these courses under such headings as "PTS Rundown", "CS-53 Rundown", "Integrity Processing", etc. Most of the courses come in individual packages. You pay for the course (see table) and then spend the designated time anywhere between 50 - 100 hours each) completing them.

No complete cost figure can be given to the would-be Scientologist because no one can say how quick or easily that person is going to adapt to the programs. A check on the amounts paid in by six former Scientologists shows that between them they spent almost \$40,000 on various courses, over a three-to-five-year period.

One Calgary source claims he knows of an old lady who

A local church spokesman said it can cost you as much as \$2,000 to reach Grade IV (regarded by Scientologists as still the beginners course), but viewed the money as well spent.

How much money flows into the church's coffers? A look at some of the individual missions gives some indication.

Even in its early days the church managed to amass vast sums. Between June 1966 and

1969 the Founding Church in Washington, D.C. took in gross receipts totalling \$738,962.

In 1973 Scientologist Kern Gerbino launched an advertising campaign in Los Angeles. He claimed 12 of the 25 top local radio stations carried Church of Scientology broadcasts and in response around 300 people signed up for church courses.

The donations from just 12 of these people amounts to over \$50,000, he boasted.

More recently an internal "Briefing Sheet" showed that in the United States alone the gross income from public sales and "processing" at its centres amount to over \$85,000 for one week. Advanced organizations and Scientology International reaped in a further \$372,000 during the same period.

Money, however, is an aspect the church will not go into great detail on. Accounts sheets are littered with Scientology jargon

and abbreviations. Getting to the core of just how much goes into the organization and how much goes out is almost an impossibility.

The church readily admits to having acquired "quite a bit" of property all over the world. Recently, it paid more than \$5 million for a new Scientology establishment.

More than \$17,000 was paid out over a four-week period recently

as "commission" to field staff members who managed to sign up new recruits. Most of this commission is expected to go back into the organization as members use it to finance further and more advanced courses.

In internal documents the church issues "commendations" to individual centres that show "increased production". In other words, the more people signed up for Scientology courses, the

Centres are operated virtually on a competitive basis. The following Org Cos/EDs, FRs, LRIL, COMMS and of course FBOs are HIGHLY COMMENDED for making at least one Org Payment Target, announces a letter from the Board of Directors of the Churches of Scientology.

The bulk of the money flowing into the organization comes from the "missions" or "franchises" as they were once known. Ten per cent of all the money given to missions is passed on to the mother church. Money given into these missions cannot be taxed.

There have been claims that the organization "pressurizes" franchise or mission holders to relinquish control of their missions on a regular basis so no individual can get too clear a picture of the amounts of money flowing into the organization.

"The holder is told he'll have to take additional training, retraining, additional processing or new advanced courses. In the meantime the mission is to be handed over to the organization. If there is any objection or protests he becomes an SP, is discredited and/or expelled. Once the books are handed over to someone new the staff will be pressurized to join the new org., or advanced courses. This way no individual gets too powerful or is made aware of what is going on," said an ex-Scientologist.

One member to back up the claim is Raymond Kemp of Tustin, California, who alleges the California mother church "pressurized" he and his wife Pamela to hand over the local mission last year. The incident is now part of \$2.5-million lawsuit filed by the Kemps against officials of the church.

Money is no object. Followers are more than willing to part with their cash in the search for "total freedom".

Asked why he spent several thousand dollars on Scientology courses before leaving, one former Calgary member said: "I don't really know. Looking back, I enjoyed the comfort of a group environment which, I was lead to believe, was trying to make this a better world.

... also got a... people would ask me what it like to be OT. When admira comes your way you're prep to go along with the be... were all these people say "wow" he's quite a guy, when the time I knew everyone coming everyone else. I me who wants to admit they s all these thousands of bucks didn't get anything for it. S I bet. But so did every else" he said.