

Clearwater Sun

April 19, 1977

Bill Would Prohibit Assisting Interpol

By JENNIFER GAVIN
Sun Staff Writer

TALLAHASSEE—Some call it the Scientology Bill, although its subject is Interpol, the international police organization.

Rep. Eric Smith, D-Jacksonville, the bill's sponsor, calls it privacy insurance for all Florida residents—including Scientologists. A separately developed but mutual interest has brought the Church of Scientology, headquartered in Clearwater, and a group of law enforcement activists together supporting the bill that would forbid law enforcement agencies in Florida to cooperate with Interpol, Smith said Monday.

"I don't care if a person is a Scientologist, a Zulu or a dwarf. They have the right to lobby their legislators," Smith said.

He and Scientology have a common purpose: getting Interpol, an agency using more than 120 nations' police forces, out of the private affairs of private citizens.

Smith, a self-described "hawk," said he became interested in Interpol last year when he was chairman of the House Select Committee on Human Rights. News articles questioning the probings of Interpol and friends, some connected with Scientology, led him to

believe the agency—which was apparently has its roots in Nazi Germany—might be overstepping accepted American parameters of privacy, Smith said.

So he organized research, contacting police agencies around the state to ask if they had much use for Interpol. Most said they didn't need its help, that it had never been an agency of any use to them—or even that Interpol had supplied false information, Smith said.

"Does law enforcement need this, given the potential for abuse?" Smith asked. "The answer is 'no.'" His bill to put the private agency out of business in Florida is supported—or at least is unopposed—by several city police departments, according to a survey he made.

Clearwater Police Chief Frank Daniels and St. Petersburg Beach Police Chief Gil Thivener were among those who said their agencies' need for Interpol was minimal. U.S. Sen. Richard Stone, D-Fla., also wrote in support of the bill.

An Interpol spokesman apparently did not plan to speak at a committee hearing on the bill scheduled for today, Smith said, displaying a letter from the agency's American branch in the Treasury Department. It suggested

that local police agencies, being the "agents" of the organization, knew more about it than any other spokesmen, Smith said. Most local police he has contacted are negative about Interpol.

Representatives of Scientology, who have organized opposition to Interpol through a group called the National Commission on Law Enforcement and Social Justice, will testify in support of the bill, Smith said.

That doesn't make it a Scientology bill, Smith stressed—although he admitted he first decided to investigate Interpol last summer, after hearing questions raised by detective who were friends with a group Scientologists.

One of the detectives later became a Scientologist, Smith said. "Whether or not Interpol has ever pursued the Scientologists does not give me one iota of concern," Smith said, citing the apparent objection of Scientologists to the police group. "We don't have a branch of Scientology in Jacksonville," he said.

Steven Heard, a spokesman for the Church of Scientology in Clearwater, said Monday the group's comments would be reserved for the hearing today when Milt Wolff of the Law Enforcement and Social Justice Group testifies.