

Cloudy



Lows, upper 60s,
highs in low 80s,
30 % rain. N wind
10-15 mph. Map,
data 2-A.

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Scientists' targets say, I told you so . . .

By BILL CORNWELL
St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer

If the Church of Scientology aimed to "take control" of Clearwater, it has succeeded, former Clearwater Mayor Gabe Cazares declared Friday.

"Clearwater is the first city to be occupied . . . by a master plan by a destructive cult," he said.

"Until recently, the Scientologists had won the battle over the minds and hearts of Clearwater residents," said Cazares, who has long been an outspoken critic of the church, which has a headquarters in Clearwater.

But Cazares said recent revelations about alleged activities of the church may eventually erode its power in Clearwater and elsewhere.

CAZARES REFERRED specifically to church documents, released Thursday by a federal judge in Washington, that apparently link the church to an attempt to maneuver government officials and the news media in order to "take control" of Clearwater.

"That just verified what I've been saying right along," said Cazares.

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— Gabe Cazares

Church spokeswoman Nancy Reitze issued a statement Friday that said the church does "not condone violations of law or established church creed by our own members."

She said the release of such documents reveals "nothing about the actual workings of the church or about the crimes of government agencies which the church has been fighting for over 25 years."



SOME OF THOSE who have been vocal in their opposition to the church said Friday they felt a sense of vindication in the latest disclosures.

"My first thought was, 'I told you so,'" said Bob Snyder, a talk show host who lost his job with a Dunedin radio station because of his sustained attacks on the church.

See REACTION, 5-A

Reaction from 1-A

Snyder, who said his name once appeared on a list of "enemies" prepared by the church, is back on the air and still denouncing Scientology.

"The most they could do to me now is kill me, but that is the only thing they can do to stop me," he said.

"They won't sue me because they know when they sue me they will make me a hero, a star, and get me on coast-to-coast television."

SNYDER AGREES with Cazares that the church, which owns property valued at nearly \$10-million in and around Clearwater, has made tremendous inroads in the community, and he attributes that largely to the news media.

"I believe they have infiltrated the media, government and business," he charged. "You (the news media) are cleaning up their act; you make them look like a bona fide organization."

According to Snyder, the news media have given undue attention to "celebrities"—like actor John Travolta, sportscaster John Brodie and musician Chick Corea—who frequent the church's Clearwater retreat.

Snyder believes that young people are influenced favorably toward Scientology when they read about famous people belonging to the church.

IT'S LIKE when the Beatles or Kiss say it's all right to take narcotics and knock yourself out on LSD,

kids think it must be okay," he said.

Another longtime critic, Clearwater City Commissioner Richard Tenney, said he is urging the U.S. Justice Department to investigate the local operations of the church.

"The time for an investigation is now," he said.

But other city officials said they know of no laws the Scientologists have broken locally.

Police Chief Frank Daniels said he has no evidence that the church has infiltrated his department or committed any illegal acts.

SO FAR AS I know, they don't even spit on the sidewalk," said Clearwater Mayor Charles LeCher.

"We all agree they should be paying taxes (the church claims it is a tax-exempt religion, and the matter is now under litigation)," said LeCher. "But I have had no indication they are trying to take over the city commission."

Asked if he agreed with Cazares that the church already controls the city, LeCher quickly replied, "No."

But LeCher said, "They could control the city commission if they all registered and voted. They have 1,000 people here and that many people could swing an election."

LeCher said the city will examine the documents released in Washington Thursday to determine if any action is necessary.

In Tampa, FBI special agent-in-charge Phillip McNiff said: "There are indications they have tried to infiltrate the FBI . . . there was an attempt, not locally, but I can't say where."