

Scientology 'dangerous and corrupt'

A HIGH COURT judge has made the most outspoken condemnation yet of the Church of Scientology, which has its British headquarters at Saint Hill Manor, East Grinstead. He condemned it as "corrupt, sinister and dangerous".

Its founder, former American science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard and his wife Mary Sue were condemned by Mr Justice Lacey as "charlatans and worse."

And the sect, said the judge, was "both immoral and socially obnoxious."

Hubbard and his helpers were said to be "grimly reminiscent of the ranting and bullying of Hitler

and his henchmen." Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, former East Grinstead MP and now representing Westden, is to ask the Home Secretary if, in view of the judge's comments, he will order a departmental inquiry into the activities of Scientology.

"I have had people quite recently come to see me concerned about the effects this organisation is having on their

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family relationships," said Sir Geoffrey.

Scientology, which has been struggling to improve its image with a series of widely publicised reforms, found itself in the na-



L. RON HUBBARD as he was in his East Grinstead days. He is now 72

tional newspaper headlines on Tuesday, after considerable exposure on radio and television the night before.

The judgment by Mr Justice Lacey in the High Court came unheralded. He had been hearing in private a dispute about the custody of two children. Then he went into open court to order a father, aged 32, who is a Scien-

year-old son and eight-year-old

daughter to their mother. She is 28 and had fought for almost six years to be reunited with them after she broke away from the Scientology.

The judge ordered the Church of Scientology to stop intimidating and harassing the mother, warning that failure to do so would be dealt with, with the "utmost severity."

The father has since remarried.

'LIES, DECEIT'

Mr Justice Lacey said Scientology was corrupt "because it is based on lies and deceit, and has as its real objective, money and power for its founder, his wife and those close to him at the top.

"It is sinister because it indulges in infamous practices, both to its adherents who do not toe the line unquestioningly, and to those outside who criticise or oppose it.

"It is dangerous because it is out to capture young people, especially children and impressionable young people and indoctrinate and brainwash them so that they become the unquestioning captives and tools of the cult, withdrawn from ordinary thought, living and relationships with others."

The judge praised the mother's courage in escaping from the "tight and unrelenting" hold of Scientology and its ruthless discipline.

He said the children were at a school controlled by Scientologists where the "baleful influence" was ever present and the objectives were to capture the child's mind. It would be a grave risk to leave them with the father, but they still loved him — and he loved them — regular visits should be arranged.

Mr Justice Lacey's reason for giving judgment in open court he described as "a warning to others."

The judge made a detailed attack on the character of Hubbard. He was not, as claimed wounded in the war and decorated. It was false to claim that he had been crippled and blinded, then cured by Scientology techniques.

Hubbard, said the judge, had disappeared and was being sought by US police.

L. Ron Hubbard was a well-known figure in East Grinstead where he established Saint Hill as the world headquarters of his movement. In August 1983 the Scientologists announced that they had "kicked out" 12 key members staff at Saint Hill as part of a policy change.

Subsequently splinter groups have emerged and challenge the Church of Scientology's monopoly on Hubbard's teachings.