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THURSDAY, AUGUST 2, 1984



Clearwater Times — JOSE FONT

Scientologist brings his allegations to Clearwater

By TIM NICKENS
Clearwater Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — The Church of Scientology brought a traveling press conference to the steps of Clearwater City Hall Wednesday, and its targets were old foes.

Saying that Clearwater "has a chance to pull itself out of a really nasty mess," the church's international president Heber Jentzsch took shots at the city's charitable solicitation ordinance (a measure aimed at the Church of Scientology) and at Michael Flynn, the Boston lawyer who recommended its passage.

Reading from a letter addressed to Mayor Kathy Kelly, Jentzsch said that city officials should repeal the ordinance and demand that Flynn repay the money he earned for conducting hearings on Scientology activities in Clearwater in

1982. Jentzsch estimated that sum at \$150,000 and recommended the money be used to correct traffic problems on Clearwater Beach.

"IT'S TIME to realize that this man has created problems for Clearwater," Jentzsch said.

That was a strictly local angle, but at similar news conferences in the past week in New York, Boston, Washington and Los Angeles, Jentzsch has made far stronger charges. He repeated them Wednesday.

He accused Flynn of conspiring to pass a counterfeit \$2-million check drawn on an account of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard and then blaming the forgery on Scientologists. The allegations surfaced last week in documents the church filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles in a civil suit brought by a Scientologist who claims Flynn's brother once kidnapped and tried to "deprogram" him.

Michael Flynn has already denied the charges, but on Wednesday Jentzsch said,

The Church of Scientology's international president Heber Jentzsch speaks Wednesday on the steps at Clearwater City Hall.

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"It's important for the people of Clearwater to realize that there's a much larger issue they didn't know about — Mr. Flynn is involved . . . in acts of crime."

NO CLEARWATER officials were in the group of about 50 onlookers at the news conference, but city commissioners contacted by the *Times* shrugged off the event as a Scientology stunt and said Jentzsch's recommendations won't be considered.

"The Church of Scientology does not dictate to the City Commission how to deal with problems in the city," Commissioner Jim Calderbank said.

"We'll solve our traffic problems, but I guarantee you that we'll also stop criminal activity by charitable groups."

Regarding the church's charges against Flynn, Commissioner Rita Garvey said that "as soon as their allegations are proven through the court system, I'll consider (demanding a refund). We have a lot of allegations against (the Church of Scientology), too."

Calderbank and Garvey were referring to allegations of fraud and other criminal activity made against the church in the 1982 hearings conducted by Flynn for the

city. Afterward, Flynn recommended that the charitable solicitation ordinance and three other laws be passed to curb Scientology's activities in Clearwater.

Jentzsch's estimate of Flynn's fee of \$150,000 could not be confirmed Wednesday. The city paid \$80,000 for his work at the hearings, although he may have been paid more for later consultations.

JENTZSCH WAS accompanied at the news conference by Gene Ingram, a private investigator from California who said he found two brothers who allegedly tried to pass the bogus check for Flynn in 1982. Also present was Henry Ferro, a Miami lawyer and president of the Florida Chapter of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

Ferro said Clearwater's charitable solicitation law, which was ruled constitutional by a U.S. district judge July 13 in Tampa, violates the Constitution and said that the city is "setting a bad precedent for America."

U.S. District Judge Elizabeth Kovachevich ruled last week that the city may enforce portions of the law while her decision is appealed. But she has scheduled a hearing for today to rule on a motion by Scientology attorneys that the city be prevented from enforcing the law and that she hear other issues in the case before an appeal is filed.