

Clearwater Sun

Northern Pinellas County's Local Daily

4 MAY 1984

Scientology business said to owe \$6,500 in taxes

By PEGGY ROGERS
Clearwater Times Staff Writer

CLEARWATER — The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) says a Scientology business that counseled other companies on adopting Scientology principles owes \$6,500 in back taxes.

The IRS last month filed a lien for that amount against the company, World Institute of Scientology Enterprises, also known as WISE. The company offices were at 34 N Fort Harrison Ave. until they moved to Los Angeles last summer.

The state Department of Labor and Employment Security filed a lien against WISE in February, but for just \$65.

Both liens seek taxes that companies pay to benefit employees, said officials with the state and federal agencies. The federal government seeks money that should have been withheld for income taxes and social security. The state seeks unemployment compensation taxes.

THE STATE lien, on money due since March 1983, becomes a legal claim on any property the group owns. The IRS lien, which involves taxes from the period ending December 1981, enables authorities to seize property, levy bank accounts or possibly penalize corporate officers. None of that has yet been done, said an IRS spokesman in Jacksonville.

A WISE director in Los Angeles said he has received the lien notices but said he did not understand what they were for. "We received some data from several different agencies in Florida dealing with the corporation," said director Bob Held.

"We have our legal department working on it," he said.

WISE offers a variety of services based on the principles of Scientology and the related Dianetics philosophy, but it operates independently of the Church of Scientology, said Held and a local church spokesman.

SOME OF WISE's corporate officers, in state corporate records, listed their

address as 210 S Fort Harrison Ave., which is the former Fort Harrison Hotel, now the church's Clearwater headquarters.

Business people who practice Scientology can join WISE as associates for \$120 a year. The company also advises other businesses on improving operations with the use of Scientology practices, he said.

And WISE charges individuals and firms that want to use Scientology trademarks for commercial purposes, said Held.

WISE is "not very sophisticated. It's quite simple and straightforward," said Held.

Please see TAXES, Page 17

Taxes from Page 1

The World Institute of Scientology Enterprises first applied for an occupational license in Clearwater in 1979, city records show. Held said the national organization was formed here. It moved to California, he said, because "there's just a lot more going on in L.A."

NO ONE from the Clearwater group is left to discuss what taxes might be owed, Held said. He declined to specifically discuss Clearwater operations and suggested a reporter "come up here (to Los Angeles) when you get a chance and take a few courses."

WISE rented space in downtown Clearwater from property owner Ottavio Paone. Paone said several people worked in the office, which seemed to do a lot of international business and labeled itself an "international business advisor."