

Clearwater Sun

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Editorials of the Sun

Cotrino case demands continued investigation

Scient 4.13.84
On Wednesday, Clearwater police released the transcript of a tape-recorded statement made on March 5 by a Scientologist, Daniel Cotrino, who claimed he was being held against his will by fellow members of the sect.

The transcript reveals that on March 5 Cotrino was angry and scared. He told police that he had paid \$7,000 for certain Scientology courses, which upon his arrival in Clearwater the sect refused to give him.

What's more, according to Cotrino's taped words, the Scientologists poured salt in his wounds by telling him he'd have to pay \$1,165 for another course before they'd let him take the one he'd already forked over \$7,000 for.

Cotrino said that when he tried to leave the Fort Harrison Hotel, two men physically detained him.

On March 9 the *Clearwater Sun* published a police report based on Cotrino's statements. Sect officials called the story "a fabrication," and—in a dramatic change of tune—Cotrino labeled the police "liars."

Well, on Wednesday we found out who lied and who told the truth.

That is made plain by the tape

transcript.

It is also plain that either Cotrino lied when he told police the Scientologists tried to detain him on March 5, or Cotrino lied when he denied making the report.

The transcribed tape recording is so convincing that we believe Cotrino was telling the truth when he made the police report. Apparently, somehow, he was later persuaded to retract his accusations. Who might have done that and how we can only leave to your imagination.

But of this we are sure: Some kind of illegal activity has occurred.

On Wednesday, an assistant state attorney said that no criminal charges are warranted in connection with the March 5 incidents.

State Attorney James T. Russell should not let his department abandon the case so quickly.

There seems to be a strong indication of (A) bait-and-switch tactics, with regard to the Scientology course Cotrino had paid for, (B) false imprisonment, with regard to the forcible detainment of Cotrino, and/or (C) making false statements about a case under police investigation.

One way or another, this case cries out for further investigation.