

## Sect protest gathers steam

From Sun reports

PORTLAND, Ore.—Members of the Church of Scientology converged on Portland on Sunday to protest a \$39 million fraud judgment which one church leader called “a slap in the face of the First Amendment.”

The Rev. John Carmichael, head of the church in Oregon, predicted Sunday morning that the Multnomah County Circuit Court jury award will not stand on appeal.

“Major disasters in which hundreds of people are killed don’t get \$39 million judgments,” Carmichael said.

In Clearwater, Scientology followers gathered for the second straight day to protest the ruling and rally in the name of religious freedom.

Several hundred followers gathered on a grassy knoll out-

side of the Sand Castle hotel overlooking Clearwater Bay to hear Church of Scientology International President Heber Jentzsch speak via a telephone hook-up from Portland.

Jentzsch told those who had gathered in Clearwater that fellow Scientologist from around the world “have left their homes and their jobs to be counted in the movement of the 80s—the fight for religious freedom.”

The jury, after a 10-week trial and 2½ days of deliberations, awarded the judgment Friday to Julie Christofferson Titchbourne, 27.

Ms. Titchbourne, a member of the church for nine months in 1975 and 1976, testified that church teachers and literature told her Scientology could improve her weak eyesight, raise her I.Q. and teach her more about the mind than any psychi-

atrist or psychologist.

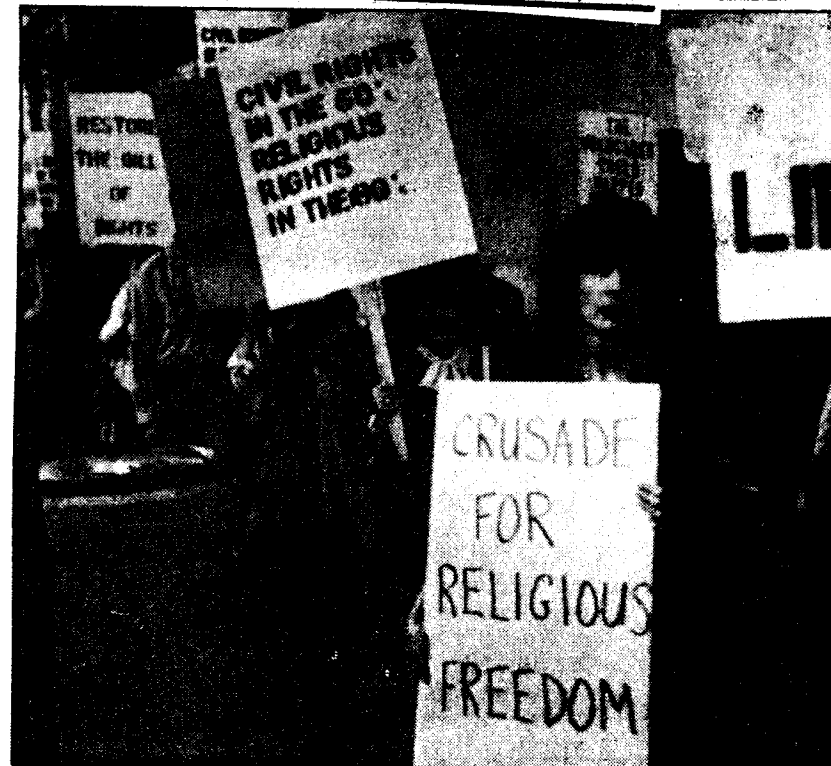
Carmichael said Sunday that he did not know whether the church’s founder, science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, was aware of the judgment. He said he doubted if Hubbard would get involved in the protests or the planned appeal.

“He just finished a 10-volume work of fiction and, frankly, he’s got better things to do,” Carmichael said.

Ken Houden, head of the church in Los Angeles and former church leader in Oregon, said the ruling was “a slap in the face of the First Amendment and a direct attack on all religions.”

He predicted Ms. Titchbourne “won’t see one thin dime of that \$39 million.”

Houden said Ms. Titchbourne was merely a pawn in an attempt to ruin the church.



Sect marchers protest decision in Portland, Ore.

AP photo