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# Scientologists chorus 'amen' to court criticisms

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A gathering billed as a news conference turned into a rally Wednesday as several hundred Scientologists shouted fervent "amens" to religious spokesmen decrying a \$39 million judgment against the Church of Scientology awarded by a Multnomah County jury last week.

"I heard a fight was going on in Oregon, and I wanted to get in on it," said the Rev. Everett Sileven, a Baptist minister from Louisville, Neb., who served 157 days in jail because he refused to permit state certification of teachers in his church-run school and other requirements for state accreditation.

"The church did not promise her any money, any property or defraud her out of any possessions," Sileven said in a brief interview, referring to the suit successfully brought against the Church of Scientology and its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, by Julie Christoferson Titchbourne of Portland.

Titchbourne, 27, a former church member, said the church made fraudulent misrepresentations to her when she was a member and that she was victimized by "wanton misconduct" by the church and Hubbard.

Sileven, whose refusal to cooperate with state authorities in Nebraska in 1982 and 1984 drew national attention and became a cause celebre in some religious circles, said the Scientology case raised religious freedom issues because courts were claiming jurisdiction in dealing with what he termed "the ideology and philosophy of a particular religion."

"No one coerced her into coming into church," he said.

Other speakers at the rally, held in Lownsdale Square in front of a backdrop of a dove and the logo, "International Crusade for Religious Freedom," echoed Sileven's comments.

Joining him on the podium were several other ministers, including the Rev. Jim Nicholls, an Assembly of God minister from York, Pa., who operates a television ministry; the Rev. Wesley Wakefield, bishop general of the Bible Holiness Movement and vice president of Canadians United for the Separation of Church and State; and the Rev. Duane Rea, pastor of the Grace Community Church of the Valley in Glendale, Calif.

A clergy malpractice suit against Rea's church was thrown out of court last week in a landmark ruling in which the judge said sending the case

to the jury would violate the First Amendment.

At the same time as the rally, the Jewish-Christian Association of Oregon held a news conference to say it did not consider the verdict in the Titchbourne case a threat to freedom of religion.

"The constitutional right to the free expression of religion does not grant any organization or religious group the right to act irresponsibly or in violation of the legal rights of others," Rabbi Joshua Stampfer, association co-chairman, said at the news conference in Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon offices.

"In the findings of the court in this recent case, the issue is one of fraud," Stampfer continued. "When goods or services are promised, such goods or services must be delivered or consequences imposed. The consequences for failure to act responsibly must be borne by the violators, whether they be religious groups, business or industry."

The association, formed in April to address common concerns of Jewish and Christian groups, includes representatives of eight mainline Jewish groups and congregations, the local chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the 13 Christian denominations that are members of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Karen Katz, associate director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, said the organization had not been asked to intervene in the Scientology case either by Titchbourne or the church.

The Rev. John Carmichael, head of the church in Oregon, said the church had not yet decided whether to seek

ACLU support for its contention that the judgment against the church is a threat to religious freedom.

The ACLU had filed a friend of the court brief on behalf of the church in a 1979 suit successfully brought by Titchbourne but later overturned by the Oregon Court of Appeals.

"There's no question the (Titchbourne) decision implicates religious freedom issues," said Charles Hinkle, a Portland attorney and United Church of Christ minister who filed the 1979 brief and who is a member of the

church-state committee of the national ACLU. "Whenever a jury decides what is a religious issue, it is an extremely sensitive area.

"This does not mean the case was wrongly decided, however," he added.

The Church of Scientology has about 10,000 members in Oregon and claims some 6 million members worldwide, 1.6 million in the United States.

In 1983, church assets were valued at nearly \$500 million during a court case to determine whether church-founder Hubbard was alive or dead.