

## Court Ends \$1-Billion Suit Alleging Scientology Fraud

*From Times Wire Services*

A Los Angeles Superior Court judge Friday dismissed a \$1-billion class-action lawsuit filed by former members of the Church of Scientology accusing its late founder of stealing money from the organization and threatening critics.

Judge Barnet Cooperman ruled that the plaintiffs failed to successfully back up their allegations of fraud and breach of fiduciary responsibility.

The suit was filed in January, 1987, by six former Scientologists and the organization Freedom for All in Religion, which claims to represent as many as 400 former church followers.

Their suit claimed that controversial church founder L. Ron Hubbard, who died in 1986, and several of his deputies embezzled more than \$100 million in church money, that Hubbard lied about his background and that confidential

information from the former church members was used "for purposes of blackmail and extortion."

In the ruling, Cooperman said the six former members were unable to provide facts to back up their allegations of money laundering and fraud and "failed to identify the alleged communicators of confidential information" regarding their personal lives.

"This is another major victory for the Church of Scientology and for religious freedom," said the Rev. Heber Jentsch, president of the church. "The case was brought by a handful of disgruntled former church members."

Lawrence Levy, an attorney for Freedom for All in Religion, was not available for comment. Plaintiff Mary Maren said she was not aware of the ruling, but added, "All I can say is if it's true, it's going on appeal."