

tempted by cash

*Claim school
downplayed 9/91*

By RIVA HARRISON
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Two local teenagers who raised money for Narconon — a drug rehabilitation program linked to the Church of Scientology — say they were told they'd make more money fund-raising than going to school this fall.

Adam Blackburn and Dale Fairfax, who are no longer fund-raising for Narconon, said their supervisor told them they likely wouldn't want to go back to school if they continued to work as salesmen.

"He said 'You won't be going back to school after you see the money you will be making here,'" Blackburn said yesterday.

The 17-year-olds said their boss told them this when they enquired about the possibility of keeping their jobs after they returned to school in the fall.

The Sun reported Sunday about 60 Winnipeg teenagers have been hired to sell pepperoni and Say No to Drugs T-shirts door-to-door to raise money for Narconon.

Paul Wattman of Mr. Peppercette, the division of Wellington Food Service running the fund-raising program, said he didn't suggest the youths deny themselves an education.

"The sources you are using here have no credibility," Wattman said, adding he fired both teens. "They are using this to get back at the company."

Wattman later sent The Sun a copy of a petition with 19 signatures under the heading: "Paul Wattman never tried to make me quit school or encourage me to quit school."

However, Wattman earlier questioned

the credibility of 16-year-olds in general, despite accompanying about 30 teenagers to a protest held at The Sun's offices on Wednesday.

The teenagers — who admitted they didn't know Narconon was linked to the church — complained recent Sun stories left the perception the teen salespeople are linked to the cult as well.

Fairfax and Blackburn, who both openly admitted they were fired, said they were never told Narconon was connected to Scientology.

"They just told us (Narconon) was a drug rehabilitation centre, and that they have a 95-per-cent success rate," Blackburn said.

The Church of Scientology is alleged by U.S. experts to be a cult accused of criminal activity, which uses the Narconon pro-

gram to recruit members.

A Scientology spokesperson has denied the church is affiliated with Narconon, although both follow the teachings of church founder L. Ron Hubbard.

The church also supports and recommends Narconon in its literature.

Unrealistic expectations

Blackburn said Mr. Peppercette's management has unrealistic expectations of its young employees.

While they were told they could pick their own hours, Blackburn said the teenagers are encouraged to work nearly 14 hours a day, seven days a week.

"It did seem ridiculous," the 17-year-old said of the hectic pace, adding he was told 33 per cent of the profits went to Narconon.

"But when you got to the office, Paul (Wattman) was such a smooth talker, he got you pumped up to do the job.

"He can get almost anyone to do anything for him. He could get you to sell him your car for \$5."

Fairfax said their boss never stopped his motivational talks — only his tone changed if you didn't sell enough units that day.

"If you mess up, they come down on you real hard," he said, adding the person is accused of dragging down the rest of the employees.

Both youths, who have a roommate still working for Mr. Peppercette, said there's no question the company's managers got the teens "pumped up" for the demonstration at The Sun.

(PHOTO BY RIVA HARRISON)

Adam Blackburn (left) and Dale Fairfax Jr. claim they were never told Narconon was linked to Scientology.