

THE



TIMES

TUESDAY APRIL 19 1994

THE TIMES TUESDAY APRIL 19 1994

Cults 'are a recruiting ground for paedophiles'

BY MICHAEL HORSNELL

BRITAIN is home to more than 500 religious cults with an estimated 500,000 believers, many of whose children are subjected to ritual abuse, a conference was told yesterday.

The conference at Hull University, organised in response to the Waco siege in Texas last year, was attended by 150 psychologists alarmed at the effects on children of bizarre teachings by the cults. Ritually abused children are subject to prostitution and pornography in the name of religion, it was claimed.

The Cults and Counselling Conference was picketed by members of the Church of Scientology, who are angry that their organisation, which

■ Children are being ritually abused and forced into prostitution and pornography in the name of religion, a conference of psychologists has been told

has 300,000 members in Britain, should be grouped with cults.

Dr Barry Hart, head of psychology at the Scunthorpe Community Health Trust, said: "The conference is about raising the level of awareness among psychologists into cults. When they see someone with a history of anxiety and depression from childhood they should ask if ritual abuse is a factor."

Sue Hutchinson, director of Safe, which supports survivors of ritual abuse, said she dealt with victims of

international paedophile rings. She said cults indoctrinated children with ideas which terrified them into taking part in ritual abuse.

Mrs Hutchinson said: "Some cults are a recruiting ground for paedophile rings. Often these victims don't come to us until they are teenagers, or in their early 20s. They tell us that these cults are hierarchical and are a system of organised crime. Some who come to me have been abused and been involved in child prostitution and pornography.

Many talk of travel abroad." The psychologists heard that they must be aware of cults when dealing with patients with mental problems, who may create other personalities as protection or may have a misplaced fear of certain animals or objects.

Steve Hassan, a former Moonie, spoke of mind controls which cults use to trap their victims and how it was hard to break from their control.

Kevin McNamara, Labour MP for Kingston upon Hull North, who chaired the parliamentary committee on cults, also chaired the conference. He said: "It is the first time so many professionals have shared the experiences of others. We are finding out more and more about abuse and cults themselves."

□ The Archbishop of Canterbury,

Dr George Carey, last night defended the Church of England against accusations that it had become a sect by ordaining women priests. In a lecture to theologians in Uppsala, Sweden, Dr Carey argued that women priests had made the Church more, rather than less, catholic "in that the other half of the human race is now included in the Christian priesthood which is sent by Christ to share faith with others".

He said a sect was "the kind of body which imposes on others a rigid set of beliefs and behaviour which it deems to have received from God". This compared to a church which, generous in its understanding of human nature, preferred to live with the "creative uncertainty" of blurred edges.