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WPP/Lilly Trial to Begin

Jury selection is scheduled to begin tomorrow in U.S. federal court in Washington, D.C., in the Church of Scientology's \$40 million lawsuit against WPP Group's J. Walter Thompson and Hill & Knowlton units; Martin Sorrell, WPP's chief executive officer; and Eli Lilly & Co.

The trial, which is expected to last six to eight weeks, alleges Eli Lilly pressured Hill & Knowlton, a public-relations firm, into dropping the Los Angeles church organization because Scientologists were critics of the antidepressant drug Prozac, which is manufactured by Lilly.

Among the witnesses expected to be called is Mr. Sorrell. The defendants had sought a motion of summary judgment, which was denied by U.S. District Court Judge Stanley Sporkin, who will hear the case.

In his opinion, dated May 3, 1994, Judge Sporkin wrote "there is evidence" that Mr. Sorrell, WPP and JWT "conspired with Lilly; an outside actor, to plot the termination of an arrangement that was otherwise satisfactory to H&K and [the Church of Scientology]."

Philip Reiss, an attorney with the New York company Davis & Gilbert, which is representing the defendants, said on Friday, "Hill & Knowlton had the right to terminate its agreement. No reason was needed for the termination. The Church was given the required 60 days notice."

A spokesman for Hill & Knowlton said, "As many a defendant has said, we are anxious to get on with it and get it over."