

## Reforming the world in Scientology's image

The Church of Scientology attempts to reform individuals through its counseling and teaching techniques. It also has a large operation dedicated to reforming society. This comes under the heading of traditional religious activism, Scientologists say, but various government agencies say it goes far beyond. In this, the fourth and final segment of a series on Scientology, the Valley News explores the legal and political entanglements of the church.

By BRIAN ALEXANDER

The "applied religious philosophy" of Scientology has political as well as personal applications.

Beyond the level of "auditing" sessions and self-help courses, the Church of Scientology is embroiled in a wide variety of high-level political intrigues. Church officials maintain they are simply defending their religious prerogatives from government harassment. Government officials claim the government is trying to protect the public from pseudo-religious quackery.

FBI raids on Scientology offices July 8 were the latest in a long line of government attempts to expose criminal actions allegedly plotted and performed by the church. In an affidavit filed prior to the dawn raids, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said the seizure of more than 150 church documents was intended to gather evidence that Scientology members had burglarized federal records. A high level church official, Michael Meisner, had "escaped" from church detention to confess involvement in the burglaries, and to accuse the church of other illegal attempts to gather information it could not obtain through Freedom of Information Act lawsuits.

Meisner also says the church has acted to infiltrate the Justice Department and Internal Revenue Service as a means of gathering information those agencies have compiled on the church.

Church officials deny the charges and suggest Meisner may have been planted in their organization in the first place.

Subsequently, courts have ruled that the FBI searches were broader than allowable and that the documents seized must be returned to the church.

The Church of Scientology long has accused the FBI and U.S. Justice Department of having links to Interpol, the private international police agency. Recently, the church has claimed that Interpol is involved in smuggling narcotics into the United States.

The church, through its Association of Scientologists for Reform, operates a broad range of social activist groups which are officially autonomous but nevertheless are headed by Scientologists. They include:

- Narconon, a drug rehabilitation group which is especially active in prisons.

- Committee to Rehabilitate Ex-Offenders, dedicated to helping former prison inmates readjust to society.

- Citizens' Commission on Human Rights, which investigates abuses of mental patients in institutions.

Electroshock therapy is its prime target for reform.

- Gerus Society to improve medical care and nursing communities for the elderly.

- National Alliance for the Prevention of Alcohol Abuse, for rehabilitating alcoholics.

- Task Force on Mental Retardation, protecting the rights of retarded.

- Applied Scholastic Institute, for remedying learning disabilities.

- National Commission on Law Enforcement and Social Justice, the only group directly sponsored by the church, which investigates "false" reports on individuals and churches compiled by various government agencies.

- Committee on Public Health and Safety, which probes medical abuses and claims of malpractice.

Sometimes these groups and their Scientology "advisers" take their accusations against private and public institutions to the public. The campaign against electroshock therapy, for example, has extended itself into a running battle with the psychiatric profession. Dr. Henry Work, head of professional affairs for the American Psychiatric Association, told the Valley News that Scientologists have picketed APA functions.

"They claim we're hurting the American people," he says, "whereas they have the God-given message. So we're not really very friendly (toward each other)."

Also unfriendly toward the church are a number of countries around the world, partly due to false reports circulated by Interpol, the church suggests. The founder, L. Ron Hubbard, is banned from England and Rhodesia, according to one report. And the church itself is regulated in New Zealand and facing fraud charges in France. Although it was at one time banned entirely in parts of Australia, church spokesman Gene Esquivel says that decision was reversed last year.

In the United States, the Internal Revenue Service challenged the tax exempt status of the "church" from its beginning in 1951. Only 13 of the 24 Scientology churches in the U.S. are exempt from taxes now,

although a church spokesman says the other 11 will eventually win in court.

The Food and Drug Administration spent several years in court trying to prove that the Hubbard Electrometer (see accompanying story) used by Scientology ministers during auditing of parishioners was ineffective and was misrepresented. After a second trial, the church was required to place a label on each of its Electrometers to the effect that the device has no diagnostic or treatment value and is purely a religious artifact.

FDA historian Wallace Janssen told the Valley News that the federal agency first became involved with Scientology in the late 1950s. During the period of public concern over the possibility of nuclear attacks, the church marketed a "drug" called Dianezine, which purported to protect against radiation sickness. Dianezine turned out to be simple vitamin pills, Janssen says, and the church pleaded no contest to the FDA's fraud suit.

Scientologists seem almost to revel in this long history of legal crossfire as evidence of their own impact on the established order. If the grant is at tempting to squash them like ants, they reason, they must be getting under his skin.

"It is not enough that an individual himself be unabbreviated," wrote L. Ron Hubbard in Scientology's first manual, "Dianetics, the Modern Science of Mental Health," for he discovers himself within the confines of a society which itself has compounded its culture into many unreasonable prejudices and customs."

And so the Church of Scientology, with a total of 5.5 million members worldwide, intends to "clear the planet" by cleansing its inhabitants of their "aberrations" and simultaneously reforming the world order.

## Hubbard's Electrometer: Tin can technology



The Hubbard Electrometer, demonstrated by two Scientologists. Valley News photo by Jeff Goldwater.

One of the most controversial artifacts of Scientology is the Hubbard Electrometer or E-meter. Here, simple tin cans join an electrical conductance meter to indicate, supposedly, emotional reactions to unpleasant memories.

Scientology counselors or "auditors" use E-meters to help pinpoint unpleasant memories which underlie all mental illnesses, according to the church. The person being audited holds the tin cans in his hands and the needle on the meter jumps when an unhappy memory is conjured up.

In the early 1960s, the Internal Revenue Service seized two of the devices during its investigation of the church's tax exempt status. The E-meters were turned over to the National Bureau of Standards for analysis. G. F. Montgomery, an NBS engineer, testified as an expert witness in the fraud suit that ensued.

"In essence," Montgomery told the Valley News, "they were similar to electrical instruments of the sort that one uses in engineering practice to measure electrical resistance."

In this case, the tin cans are the electrodes and the meter measures electrical resistance of the skin. But Scientology spokesman Gene Esquivel says the resistance varies according to one's mental frame of mind.

Your mind is what it registers," he says. "It's not your body, it's your brain."

Controls on the device, according to Montgomery, allow the operator to adjust the starting point of the needle and to increase or decrease deflection of the needle by adjusting the sensitivity of the meter.

Esquivel demonstrated the meter for a Valley News reporter, placing the tin cans in the reporter's hands and adjusting the knobs quickly. As he lightly pinched the reporter's arm, the needle jumped.

Esquivel then asked the reporter to recall the pinch. Instead, the reporter thought of an appetizing bowl of luscious strawberries. The needle jumped.

"Okay? See that?" Esquivel said.

Next, he told the reporter to think of something pleasant. He predicted that the needle would "float." The reporter then thought of the pinch. The needle moved uncertainly on the meter. Esquivel seemed satisfied that the machine had operated as he had predicted.

Contrary to representations made, wrote U.S. District Court Judge Gerhard Gessell in 1971, there is absolutely no scientific or medical basis in fact for the claimed cures attributed to E-meter auditing.

Gessell presided over the trial initiated by the Food and Drug Administration charging the E-meter was unlabeled. Church literature seized along with the

E-meters misrepresented the device and failed to describe its proper use, according to the judge.

Subsequently, the church was required to place a warning label on all of its E-meters and all materials referring to the meter.

"By itself, this meter does nothing. It is solely for the guide of Ministers of the Church in Confessionals and pastoral counseling. The Electrometer is not medically or scientifically useful for the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of any disease. It is not medically or scientifically capable of improving the health or bodily function of anyone and is for religious use by students and Ministers of the Church of Scientology only."

When Scientology spokesman Esquivel demonstrated an Electrometer to the Valley News, the reporter noted that no such label appeared on the machine in use. Esquivel peered into every nook of the meter muttering to the effect that it is usually right here, etc.

Of course, says FDA historian Wallace Janssen, no investigation has been made to see if they're complying (with the labeling restriction) or not.

—BRIAN ALEXANDER