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Scientology Ministers Visit FDA Over Case

The head of the Baltimore office of the federal Food and Drug Administration has been visited by a group of ministers and parishioners from the Church of Scientology in connection with a U. S. District Court case being pressed by the FDA against the religious body.

The eight-year-old case, which is slated to go to court Monday, June 7, in Washington, stems from a raid on a Scientology church in the nation's capital in January, 1963, by a group of FDA-deputized Baltimore longshoremen.

The raiders seized a large quantity of Scientology literature and other materials, which the FDA is holding for eventual destruction if the courts permit.

The purpose of Tuesday's visit to Morris L. Strait of the Baltimore FDA office, according to a Scientology spokesman, was to "find out why the FDA is practicing religious persecution."

The church maintains that the

FDA is trying to destroy Scientology, despite a 1969 decision by the U. S. Court of Appeals that the church is "a bona fide religion."

The FDA claims that the church has given "false" and "misleading" information to the public, that it promises "healing" and that it promotes "drug abuse."

Scientology spokesmen note that their church operates a drug rehabilitation program called "Narconon" and that it does not condone the use of drugs.

Some legal authorities see the case between the FDA and the church as having widespread implications for the concept of religious freedom guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.