

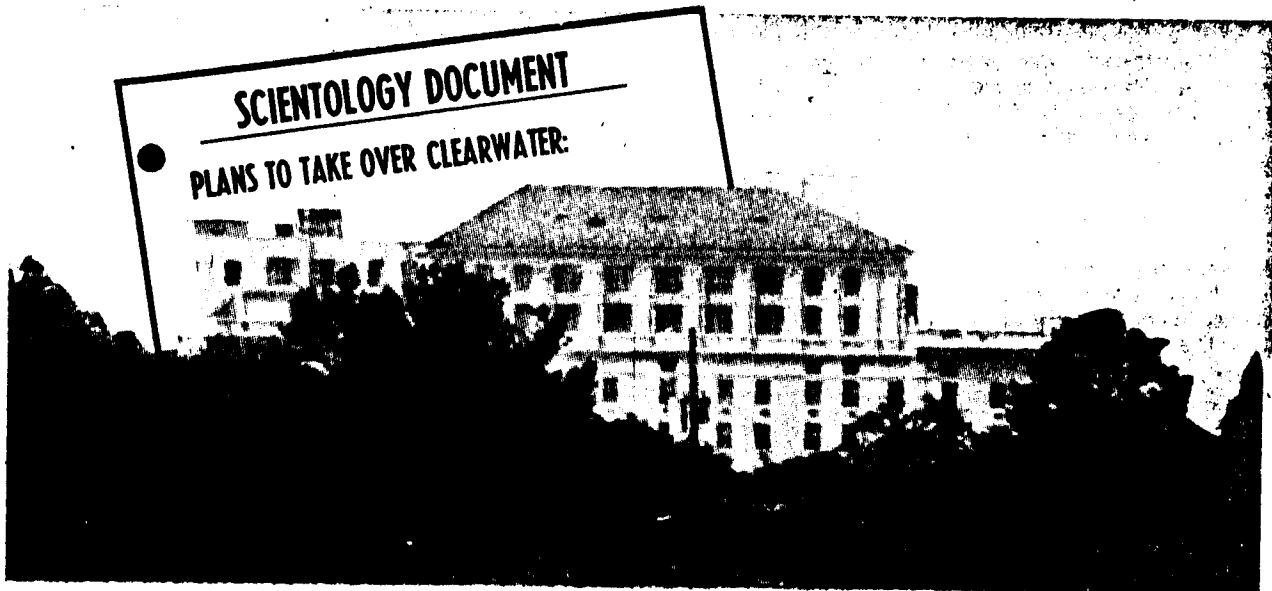
# Clearwater Sun

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# Scientologists plot city takeover



By RICHARD LEIBY  
Sun Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—The Church of Scientology of California had big plans for the unsuspecting community of Clearwater when it arrived there in November 1975.

In essence, the sect wanted to control the city's politicians, media and religious groups.

To that end, the Scientologists have evidently failed. Hardly any Clearwater resident is not skeptical of the sect's proclaimed goals and "reform" activities.

Nevertheless, the church has purchased \$8 million in Clearwater buildings and land and continues to work for the potential to exert the political pressure it needs to gain acceptance.

## ANALYSIS

Documents released here, as well as activities of Clearwater Scientology groups, indicate the sect has no intention of letting up in its quest to somehow "take control."

In December 1975, top church leaders were plotting to use the United Churches of Florida, their front group, as an instrument to "make allies of religious and local government opinion leaders," according to documents.

The next step, Scientology correspondence shows, was to attempt to discredit or alienate groups or persons who did not support the United Churches.

"If we unite all groups into an interplay and use all forces . . . and channel them, we have a very big chance of winning. So we can and must take the lead. And we will ourselves develop many leaders," the documents quote leaders as saying.

But secrecy was the prerequisite for achieving the goal and that meant controlling local media. As one guardian order states, Scientologists must begin to "proof up ourselves against any threat by taking control of the key points in the Clearwater area."

Of course, once local papers began investigations that culminated in the disclosure of the Scientology link to the United Churches in January 1976, that part of the plan was useless.

Scientology, criticized in other parts of the nation and the world as a mind-control cult, certainly was not to be welcomed with open arms by political and religious leaders in Clearwater.

The failure of those early public relations attempts apparently led to the development of a new scheme: Operation "Snow White," part of a larger worldwide Scientology drive to eliminate all negative publicity about the group.

Documents show that in November 1976, and in the following months, Scientologists sought to uncover what they said were "false" sect activity reports allegedly contained in the files of scores of local, county and state government agencies.

The documents indicate the targets included the Clearwater and Dunedin city commissions, the mayors' of-

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# Activities

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ices, the city attorneys' offices, police departments and even planning and zoning boards. Also put under surveillance were county agencies, including the health department, the department of consumer affairs and the school system, according to the documents.

The cult demanded numerous state agencies—even the division of hotels and restaurants—relinquish Scientology files. And the documents indicate Scientologists

were planted in the agencies to ensure compliance.

In most cases—the Dunedin mayor's office, for example—no files on Scientology existed, but church officials vowed to press on.

"These guys are clean," a sect member wrote in appraising the Dunedin mayor's office. "But the Dunedin Police Department and city attorney definitely are not."

No documents indicated why the latter offices were not "clean."

Even a concerned citizen's letter to the Clearwater City Commission was reason enough for a full-scale probe. A Clearwater couple wrote on Feb. 17, 1976, that they were suspicious of the Scientologists' motives and wondered what could be done. The church officials who obtained a copy of the letter termed that attitude a "false report . . . which could stand to be corrected."

The documents now on public file at the U.S. Court-house here do not precisely detail the extent of the Scientologists' attempt to infiltrate offices in Clearwater. But larger scale disclosures are expected to result as thousands of more documents are cleared for release by U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey.

Because the most recent documents on file here are dated 1976 and 1977, it also is unclear whether clandestine "Snow White" operations continue today in the old Fort Harrison hotel and Bank of Clearwater buildings.

But recently, Scientology-affiliated groups have launched local extensive investigative campaigns against private agencies and some state officials.

The "elimination of false reports" is the goal of the Clearwater-based American Citizens for Honesty in Government, which has boasted recently of its investigations into State Department of Transportation and local IRS and FBI activities.

ACHG is headed by Milton Wolfe, who arrived in Clearwater in late 1975 as a spokesman for the United Churches, the Scientology front group.

Another group, the Committee for the Protection of Mental Patients' Rights, has probed alleged abuse at local hospitals such as Anclote Psychiatric Center and Horizon Hospital.

Both groups say they are dedicated to "social reform."

But critics, such as former Clearwater mayor Gabe Cazares, himself a target of a Scientology smear effort, call such groups a "front for continuing illegal Scientology activities."

"They exploit people and intimidate public officials for political ends that further the goals of (L. Ron) Hubbard, their illustrious founder," Cazares said in an interview earlier this week. "They have become a politically fascist organization".

A document dated Nov. 4, 1974 and signed by Mary Sue Hubbard, the founder's wife, explained to church officials how Scientology must avoid being labeled a political group. The solution: "All political activity is to be carried on via front groups."

While local church spokesmen say they cannot speak for convicted leaders such as Mrs. Hubbard, the documents make clear there always has been a connection between the guardian offices in England, Los Angeles and presumably Clearwater.

An undated memo from Jane Kember, the worldwide guardian, indicted for conspiracy and awaiting extradition in England, tells of a "nonexistence" policy to be used when eliminating "false reports." In Scientology terms, this apparently means church members should do all they can to fight negative publicity. The letterhead on Miss Kember's memoir reads: "The Church of Scientology of California—Your Guardian Angel To Complete Success."

Cazares has said the only way the Clearwater community can fight Scientology is to "alienate them completely. Ostracize them. This will destroy their power."

Such vehement resistance apparently was anticipated by founder L. Ron Hubbard himself. In a 1976 policy statement included in a package summarizing local "Snow White" efforts Hubbard declared:

"This one we win. No matter what skill, exactitude, cleverness or boldness is required, this one we win.

"We never had any real opponents, technically or ethically. Now we will have a long hard-fought battle and we will have no opponents at all."