

Los Angeles Times

24 Part I—Wed., July 25, 1979

Los Angeles Times ★

Scientologists' Suit Seeks Return of Seized Papers

RIVERSIDE (AP)—The Church of Scientology has filed suit to retrieve documents seized in a sheriff's raid on the church's Riverside Mission and to quash a search warrant used in the June 13 raid.

"The seizure," said Christopher Ashworth, a Los Angeles attorney representing the church, "was offensive to the Fourth Amendment rights of citizens who were part of the church."

The suit contends:

—That most of the information used in support of the warrant was more than a year old and, therefore, too old to be used.

—That two informers whose statements were used to support the warrant were unreliable and their statements were not corroborated.

—That the search was unreasonable in that sheriff's deputies battered down the door of the mission. Deputies said no one responded to their knock.

—That the warrant was too general and that information sought, such as W-2 income-tax forms and loan applications, could have been obtained

through subpoenas.

The stickiest point, both sides agree, revolves around the return of "confessional formularies," which the Scientologists contend contain confidential information that include records of narcotics use, marital infidelity and other matters relating to sexual conduct.

"The fight will be over whether things named and seized are privileged religious documents or something else," said Dep. Dist. Atty. Scott Sells. "Some of the things referred to in the pleadings, the confessionals, have things in them that we are interested in . . . I'm confident that the warrant will stand up."

County authorities said the raid was necessary because of allegations that church members had obtained loans by lying on financial statements, and that the statements were then supported by church officers when the lending companies called to verify information such as employment and salaries. Loan money was then allegedly turned over to the church.