

East Grinstead Courier

Friday, April 23, 1993

Z

8

The Courier, April 23, 1993

COURIER COMMENT

THE OPENING of the Hubbard Dianetics Bookshop in East Grinstead has caused concern in many quarters of the town because of the links with the Church of Scientology.

Two local vicars have spoken out over the move, so has the headmaster of one of the town's secondary schools.

They fear the shop will provide a front to encourage people, particularly the young, to take part in "personality testing" undertaken by the scientologists.

Feelings ran high among campaigners outside the shop on Saturday protesting at the opening of the new premises and members of the Scientology movement have accused them of running a Nazi-style hate campaign.

East Grinstead and its people have a history of tolerance. The town saw the birth of the world famous Guinea Pig Club during the second world war when fighter pilots with horrific injuries underwent pioneering surgery at the Queen Victoria Hospital.

The success of the recovery is often put down to the understanding of the townspeople who welcomed the men and accepted their presence in the community.

It was this acceptance that helped the men on their road to recover. This tolerance and acceptance still abounds. The town has a reputation as something of a crossroads for a variety of groups, religions and beliefs.

But it is essential that this tolerance and acceptance must not be abused. Nor must tolerance be confused with weakness.

Church leaders are right to counsel caution. Of course people have the freedom of choice, whether it is over their beliefs or which shops they choose to visit, but they must also be aware that involvement with the Church of Scientology can lead to the spending of money for various courses on offer.

They must be certain in their own minds it is what they want and what commitment is expected from them.

For more than 30 years East Grinstead has accepted followers of Scientology and their families. Likewise the movement must show deference to the townspeople and like any organisation be prepared to take the rough with smooth. There will always be critics — it is part and parcel of freedom.