

OPINION

Analysis, Interpretation and Comment

Scientologists Never Change

ONE THING you can say about the Scientologists: they're consistent.

When Clearwater first came to know them a few years ago they were hostile, defiant and litigious.

Well, they haven't changed an ounce. Tuesday, when they learned that 11 of their fellow laborers in the vineyards of the Church had been indicted for stealing government documents and illegally wiretapping government telephones, local Scientologists were about as subdued and chastened as a tiger interrupted in the mating act.

In what could be termed a "you're another" response, local spokesman Nancy Reitze said it was laughable that the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Justice Department should talk about anyone else bugging or stealing.

She said Scientologists would not stand for such antics on the part of the government. The local group said it will soon file suit in federal district court, charging the FBI with withholding documents about the Scientologists, in violation of the Freedom of Information Act.

OF THE many semi-profundities we could deliver following this week's indictments, one of them is "Settle down for the long haul."

The Scientologists have been around for about 30 years. They are tough, well-financed and resourceful. So is the federal government. Therefore we can look forward (if that is the correct word) to many more months of legal motions, responses, countersuits and appeals, in addition

to the trials themselves.

Another likelihood is that the indictments will not diminish the fervor with which the Scientologists practice their faith, or whatever that stuff is they practice.

Persecution makes the heart grow stronger, sometimes, and the Scientologists sincerely believe the government is out to get them.

A third strong conjecture is that by the time the trials are over the world will know more about the Church of Scientology than ever before.

We will get a look at persons we have never seen before, and the world will become better able to judge for itself just what the Scientologists are and are not.

IF THE 11 accused persons are truly innocent of the 216 counts with which they are charged, we hope the trial juries find them so.

If they are guilty of crime, they should be fined or imprisoned, or both.

Having delivered those sententious pearls, we must add that it would not break our hearts if one day the Scientologists packed up and moved out of Clearwater forever.

We don't much care whether they are church people, wiretappers, reformers, imposters, messiahs or whatever. For Clearwater they have been nothing but trouble.

If the indictments and subsequent trials somehow contribute to the exodus of the Scientologists from our city, we shall rejoice. The Scientologists do not need Clearwater, and Clearwater does not need them.