



LOCAL NEWS

Scientologists Cancel Talks With Mrs. De Blaker

By MARK SABLEMAN
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A planned talk between two Church of Scientology officials and City Commissioner Karleen De Blaker was called off this week because the Scientologists were wary of unwanted publicity and possible "political overtones" to the discussion.

Mrs. De Blaker was invited last week to meet privately at the Fort Harrison with two officials of United Churches of Florida, the Scientology-sponsored group organized to promote a dialogue among different religions.

But a recent suit by the Scientologists against Mayor Gabriel Cazares apparently prompted Mrs. De Blaker to change the plans slightly, and the Scientologists didn't like

the change. She suggested meeting at city hall and added the meeting would be open to the press.

United Churches Director Frederick M. Rock, mostly disturbed by the open nature of the meeting Mrs. De Blaker planned, cancelled the meeting in a letter hand-delivered to Mrs. De Blaker's home late Thursday night.

Rock told Mrs. De Blaker in the letter he planned the personal meeting "merely to allow you the opportunity to visit us at the Fort Harrison and to answer any questions you may have regarding Scientology or United Churches."

But he said "it appears that the press now would be insistent upon construing such a meeting to be simply another

'development' in the on-going Cazares-Scientology controversy."

Rock said an interview he had last Monday with Commissioner Karen Martin had been "quite enjoyable" but since "has become something of an event in the press." Mrs. Martin's visit with the Scientologists was mentioned briefly in local newspaper reports.

Rock said he was not opposed to Florida's Government in the Sunshine law, but he emphasized that his group sought "personal, human communication between all involved," saying that had been absent so far.

"Instead, residents of Clearwater have been forced into the role of spectators in this affair, watching charges appear in

the press one day and countercharges the next.

"I feel that press coverage on practically all issues is probably vital. But it isn't a substitute for personal communication," he said.

Rock asked Mrs. De Blaker to meet with him sometime later, "when the unwanted but perhaps unavoidable political overtones would not be given such heavy play."

Because of the postponement of Mrs. De Blaker's meeting, the Scientologists have met with only one commissioner since their overtures last weekend. Cazares and Commissioner John Rankin declined private meetings because of the lawsuit against the mayor, and Commissioner Joseph Carwise said his calendar was full.