

Church group accused of evading rules

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — A fundamentalist church group improperly spent \$117,000 earmarked for a low-income housing project here and tried to evade government rules to sell the building at an enormous profit, HUD records and court documents show.

The sale of The Concord, a 150-unit high-rise building, was halted through the persistence of tenants who feared they would be evicted or their rents would triple, lawyers familiar with the case said.

The tenants urged the inspector

general at the Department of Housing and Urban Development to conduct an audit, which found \$117,787 in project funds were improperly spent by The Concord's owner, Community Churches of America.

Among other things, HUD found that Concord funds were used to pay church group officers and purchase two vans used for church events. The housing agency eventually reached a settlement with the group on the misspent money.

The Glendale-based fundamentalist group first tried to sell the

apartment building in 1982 for \$5.5 million, after paying off the balance of a \$2.05 million HUD loan to the original developer. Congress has since prohibited pre-payment of HUD loans unless the housing secretary finds that existing tenants are protected from eviction or higher rents.

Community Churches tried again in 1985 to sell the building for \$5.5 million, under the protection of a bankruptcy reorganization. But the bankruptcy sale was blocked after objections were raised by tenants,

church creditors and HUD lawyers, according to court records on file in nearby Los Angeles.

Community Churches was headed by the Rev. William S. McBirnie, a charismatic preacher. Community Churches acquired The Concord in 1979 and organized a non-profit foundation to run the building in accordance with HUD regulations. The building was erected in 1966 to provide subsidized housing for the elderly and handicapped.

But there were problems from the outset, said Clements Gordon, 81, a former building manager who spearheaded the tenants' fight.

McBirnie planned to use the Concord to house his own parishioners and the loyal listeners to his anti-communist radio broadcasts, "Voice of Americanism," he said.

By 1982, McBirnie decided to sell The Concord because "we were constantly being frustrated at making improvements in the building and not being able to do the good work that we had intended," he said in a legal declaration. He did not return calls seeking comment.

In August 1982, Gordon and other tenants filed suit to block the sale of The Concord.

There was intense pressure to settle because McBirnie's groups had obtained a short-term loan at high interest to pay off the HUD loan, McNutt said.

Europeans fear repeat of U.S. crack flood, work to avoid crisis

LONDON (AP) — Crack seizures in Western Europe amount to a few ounces a year, a tiny haul alongside the U.S. flood. But many Europeans are getting worried.

"Crack is the specter I see hanging over Europe," Britain's home secretary, Douglas Hurd, told delegates of the 23-nation Council of Europe whom he invited to London in May to discuss drug abuse.

"Our job must be to work together, urgently, to ensure that the United States experience is not repeated here," he said.

Britain is the only European country already battling a crack problem. But with crack's parent drug, cocaine, flowing into Europe alongside horrifying images of crack's impact in the United States, vigilance is increasing.

Interpol, the Paris-based international police agency, now monitors all crack seizures, rather than only those of over 100

grams, or 3.5 ounces. Agents of the Drug Enforcement Agency have held a workshop to teach Italians how to spot the substance and the problem is likely to be high on the agendas of two major drug conferences.

Crack is a smokeable derivative of cocaine that gives an intense high but wears off in a few minutes, leaving a lingering depression.

Europeans are divided on the size of the wolf at the door. The Dutch predict they will even have a problem. Other countries doubt crack could find its way into Europe that it has in the United States, where crime and drug abuse rates are higher.

West German police have seized so little that they are not keeping track. Swedish police say they have heard of its use but haven't seized any. The Swiss confiscated two grams in 1988.

Spain and Italy have seized more

Board investigates track investors, relationship with indicted partner

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The State Racing Board has asked two investors in a Kenosha County greyhound track to clarify their relationship with an associate indicted on criminal charges in Alabama.

But Terence M. Dunleavy, the board's executive director, said the board's letter to Dairyland Greyhound Park investors Herman and Elliot Maisel was "standard operating procedure."

"All we're doing is investigating the situation to make sure everything is on the up and up because this is a racing-related matter," Dunleavy said.

Ellis McDonald, a partner with the Maisels in the Mo-

bile Greyhound Track, was indicted in Alabama on several criminal charges.

The charges include racketeering, mail fraud, intimidating a witness, conspiracy to defraud by obstructing the Internal Revenue Service, aiding in the preparation of false income tax returns and tax evasion.

He is accused of receiving more than \$1 million in kickbacks and committing other crimes in connection with the construction of a waste water treatment plant in Mobile, Ala., and another contract with the Scott Paper Co.

Dunleavy said he was confident McDonald's indictment would affect the Maisels' Wisconsin track license.

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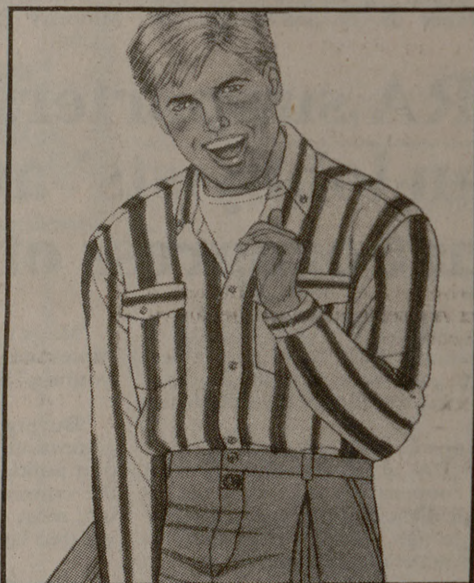
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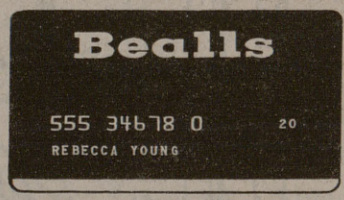
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