

'Ready for Jail' —Armstrong

Churchman Denies Role in Sit-in

BY RUSSELL CHANDLER
Times Religion Writer

Worldwide Church of God patriarch Herbert W. Armstrong today urged his followers to "be ready to go to jail if necessary" in their efforts to defend the Pasadena headquarters of the sect against intrusion by court-appointed officials and law enforcement officers.

"Being subject to the laws doesn't always mean to obey them," Armstrong, 86, said in a morning message to about 1,000 ministers of the church gathered in Tucson. The talk was relayed to Pasadena, where an estimated 500 people were continuing a sit-in that began Monday morning.

Monday, Superior Court Judge Julius M. Title told church attorneys to stop obstructing court-appointed receiver Steven Weisman, a retired judge, or else Title would order sheriff's deputies to the church to make sure his orders were carried out.

A hastily called Superior Court session was scheduled for later this afternoon, presumably to authorize such a measure.

Armstrong, speaking in a strong voice, claimed he had "nothing to do" with the peaceful sit-in, which church leaders were calling "an ecclesiastical service."

But, said Armstrong, who has been in Tucson since the embattled church was placed under temporary receivership on Jan. 3, "They're looking for guidance from me."

"I wonder if people aren't going to have to go to jail," he continued, adding: "If we have to suffer the persecution of being thrown in jail, then I'm ready to go . . . if they want to arrest 86-year-old people."

Several hundred church members listening to Armstrong's message in the Ambassador Auditorium broke into applause.

Although Armstrong did not advise followers to break the law, he stressed that loyal members of the Worldwide Church would "obey God . . . and fight to protect and honor the very building of God."

Shortly before 9 a.m. today an attorney representing receiver Weisman went to the one small entrance at the back of the church administration building that has remained unlocked.

Security forces for the church and college refused him entrance.

Meanwhile, seven security guards hired by the receiver were stationed on campus, three on the fourth floor where Weisman's temporary offices are located.

Guard W. Van Dyck told a reporter that no work for the receiver was being done today and that his sole job was to "protect records." A dozen cardboard filing cabinets were seen stacked along the wall of a room adjoining Weisman's office.

A church leader cautioned the clusters of men, women and children inside the administration building that "We want the meeting to be ecclesiastical. . . . We are here to worship God. . . . Apparently it's our only defense."

He warned that if it appeared there was a "party atmosphere . . . we'll lose our credibility."