

NEWSLETTER

COMMITTEE ON MORMON SOCIETY AND CULTURE

No. 3, 1977

P.O. Box 7258, Univ. Sta.
Provo, UT 84602

All Recipients Please Note

This is the last issue of this Newsletter. Four years ago I (John Sorenson) began this group trying to stimulate interest in serious study of contemporary Mormon society and culture, I hoped that others would join with me through a "Committee" and newsletter aimed to that end. Initial response was encouraging and many people stepped forward with a few dollars in hand to assist. Dollars, consequently, have never been our problem. Yet the organization was never able to get up enough speed for take-off. I have personally produced every one of the newsletters. Recipients have often expressed appreciation for the information thus conveyed to them, but recipients do not a committee nor a newsletter make. I am unaware of any evidence that this organization or the newsletter have in any significant way stimulated actual research on the Mormons. Failing to meet that objective, my time and energy cannot be justified in continuing this activity. Consequently this issue terminates the Newsletter. Anybody who would like a refund of dues because the service rendered has been inadequate, write to me, and I will gladly satisfy you in that regard.

My thanks go to those whom I have got to know through the Newsletter and particularly to those who have sent in items to be noted therein. I shall continue to be pleased to act personally as a sort of clearing house for researchers working on study of Mormon society and culture, as far as correspondence will allow.

New Publications and Studies

Jerry C. Gephart, *et al.*, "A note on liberalism and alienation in Jewish life," Jewish Social Studies, 36 (1974): 327-29. (Survey of Jews in Salt Lake.)

Willard Dale Rees, "The professional education association movement and Utah: an interpretive history." Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1977, Order No. 77-15, 537 (U. of U.)

Edwin S. Gaustad. Historical Atlas of Religion in America, Rev. ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1976, pp. 83-89.

Richard C. Poulsen, "'This is the Place': myth and Mormondom," Western Folklore, 36 (1977): 246-52.

Thomas G. Alexander. A Clash of Interests: Interior Department and Mountain West 1863-96. Provo: BYU Press, 1977.

Melvin R. Maxfield, "The Book of Mormon and the conversion process to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: a study of recent converts." Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1977, Order No. 77-17, 620 (BYU)

Allan D. Payne, "The Mormon response to early progressive education, 1892-1920." Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1977, Order No. 77-16, 051 (U. of U.)

Leonard J. Arrington, "The Latter-day Saints and public education," Southwestern Journal of Social Education, 7 (1977); 9-25.

William A. (Bert) Wilson, "Mormon folk belief and the Arab-Israeli conflicts." Paper delivered in Jerusalem at World Congress of Jewish Studies, Aug. 7-14, 1977.

Roger Graves, "Cockfighting in Utah: a traditional sport." Paper given at Annual Meeting, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Sept. 17, 1977.

Gloria Cronin. "Water witching in Utah." Paper at Utah State Hist. Society.

William A. Wilson, "'Get in your year's supply': Mormon doomsday stories." Paper at Utah State Historical Society.

Eugene E. Campbell, "Marriage and divorce in early Utah." Address to Utah State Historical Society.

Klaus D. Gurgel, "Travel patterns of Canadian visitors to the Mormon culture hearth," Canadian Geographer, 20 (1976): 405-18.

"Measuring Mormonism," Volume 4, Fall 1977

This periodical continues the series edited by Glenn M. Vernon, Sociology, U. of Utah, and is available from The Association for the Study of Religion, Inc., 3646 East 3580 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84109.

Thomas H. Kemp, "The impact of religious affiliation on equal employment opportunity in Utah State government, pp, 1-43. (Data and observations of some interest, but the methodology and analyses are flawed, so the results are questionable at certain points.)

O. Kendal White, Jr., "Cooperation and collectivism: Mormon responses to American capitalism," pp. 44-53. (Pedestrian introduction which fails to deliver substance promised in the title. An essay, this piece uses virtually no data. Easily-checked assertions are made which are not correct, such as that the LDS Church "is governed by businessmen and lawyers.")

Clifton Amundsen and Gary E. Madsen, "A comparison of Mormon and non-Mormon faculty religiosity," pp. 54-64, (Survey of faculty, evidently at Utah State U., yielding 65% return from a stratified sample. Quality of the data returned is admitted to be problematic. Some 57% felt their "religious orientation" had not changed, or had changed only slightly, "during college." At the extremes, 18% identified a great increase, but 10% a great decrease. The Mormon subsample reported increases for 46%, but decreases in only 12%. For non-Mormons the respective figures were 22% and 35%.)

Wilford E. Smith, "By their fruits," pp. 65-75, (Another set of results from Smith's extensive surveys of western college students in 1949, 1959, and 1961. Here we learn the ranking of unacceptability of selected practices; that is, belief that the acts are immoral in and of themselves. Results are given by gender, church attendance level and religious affiliation. A striking picture of certain "Mormon values" emerges, for example:

HIGH-ATTENDING LDS MALES	LOW-ATTENDING LDS MALES	HIGH-ATTENDING LDS FEMALES
Homosexuality (index 20.4)	Homosexuality (34.7)	Homosexuality (10.2)
Coitus (35.5)	Word of Honor (127.7)	Coitus (18.9)
Drunk	Coitus	Drunk
Liquor	Cheating	Nocturnal emissions
Tobacco (84.0)	Drunk (192.3)	Tobacco (40.7)
Beer	Steal	Beer
Coffee	Profane	Liquor
Tea	Petting	Masturbating
Steal	Masturbating	Coffee
Word of Honor (104.3)	Tea (215.8)	Steal. (60.0)
(etc. to 17th item)	(etc. to 17th item)	(etc; to 17th item)
Nocturnal emissions (233.2)	(Cola (289.6)	Cola (177.1)

For example, the rank order of unacceptability judged by Mormon males who attended church frequently did not correlate highly with rankings by those Mormon males who reported infrequent church attendance. LDS female rankings were closer together. All non-Mormon groupings listed homosexuality first, then stealing, coitus or word of honor were most often in the next three positions. Last place for those students was cola, with the exception of Protestant females attending church infrequently, who listed tobacco 17th. Non-Mormon students showed greater agreement than did LDS across the church attendance differential. Some information is also given on changes over time in these rankings.

Gary F. Jensen, "A research note on religion and delinquency: the Mormons," pp. 76-81. (One hundred Mormons were included in this survey of 3000 high school students in southern Arizona. High and low church attendance and metropolitan vs. small town dimensions are distinguished. LDS rates of delinquency self-reported are nearly the same as Catholic and Protestant, except for smoking, drinking and drunkenness, with less difference in the metropolitan setting than in small towns. Some belief and church attendance data are also given.)

Don B. Center of University of Illinois-Urbana has made studies of the family home evening program, one involving forty LDS families and another in which a small group of non-Mormon families tried an experimental family home evening program with interesting results. Center's address is: Dept. of Speech Communication, U. of Illinois, Urbana, 61801. Page 82 gives a little information on his findings.

Dialogue, Spring 1977

This issue is devoted to "Imagemakers: Mormons and the Media." Articles include an interview with Wendell Ashton, the director of public relations for the Church; on Church broadcasting; a picture of The Deseret News and its recent problems; Mormons in film, treated historically; and popular perceptions of Mormonism as mediated by the press. All of these contain some information of value,

but most of them take very small looks at the subjects they purport to treat. Overall we do not get from the ambitious title any sort of synthetic picture of "Mormons and the Media." One novel and valuable short piece surveys the Mormon book publishing industry today, reporting that no fewer than 47 publishers aim at this market.

Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation among the Mormons

This book, by Leonard J. Arrington, Feramorz Y. Fox, and Dean L. May (Deseret Book, 1976), is one of the major works appearing in recent years. Mere skimming might suggest that it is of historical interest only, but by following the theme of community and cooperation up to current times, the authors have made a significant contribution to understanding Mormon society and culture. Particularly striking is the picture which emerges of great flexibility (and considerable disagreement) on the part of authorities on how the central objectives were to be accomplished, leading to conscious experimentation. Equally striking is the picture of the general resistance on the part of the general membership to most innovation. Chapter 15 considers the Mormon welfare system from 1936 to 1975. Its 21 pages provide some history and description in overview, although much remains to be said. This chapter has the appearance of "cleaning up." Unfortunately, no continuity is provided to bridge between the late nineteenth century, with which the immediately previous chapter had been concerned, and the Great Depression. Actually, considerable continuity in concepts and certain procedures did provide a bridge, so that the events of the 1930s were less isolated than appears in this work.

(For example, see the chapter entitled "Mormon miracle" in Paul Bailey's volume, Polygamy Was Better than Monotony, concerning the Church's rebuilding his family's burned house nearly sixty years ago.)

An additional datum shedding light on the problems of rebuilding Mormon cooperation, let alone extending it, occur in a related paper (which was given at the BYU Centennial conference on "Economics and the Mormon Culture"). L. Mayland Parker of Arizona State U. provided data on rather extensive surveys done by him concerning cooperative attitudes. He asked how people would prefer to operate a large acreage of farm land which had come into their possession: as private entrepreneur, incorporated and maintaining corporate control, in the form of a democratic cooperative with neighbors, or as a genuine collective corporate farm with profits distributed on the basis of "wants and needs." Sizable samples (total N=937) of "general public," LDS, and American Indian responses were obtained over a period of recent years. Among many interesting points revealed is that LDS adults are more likely than even most Americans to prefer the first two, "capitalistic" options, while LDS leaders are even stronger in such preferences. Parker then asked other questions of Mormons, such as how they considered Church Authorities would prefer to organize this farm. Two additional questions asked how the respondents thought God would want the farm organized and how Karl Marx would want it! Serious stresses, paradoxes and binds were, of course, revealed in the responses. Parker's data demonstrate a continued commitment of many Mormons to the old goals discussed in the Arrington, Fox and May book, but equally show the lack of a resolution for the problems in a practical sense today. Clearly there is much more to be written about "Community and cooperation among the Mormons," although our three authors have given us a fine start toward understanding.

Is There a Future for one Study of Mormon Society and Culture?

After trying to promote this sort of study for several years, what can I say about the prospects? I would guess that the future is a long way off. Only a handful of people are in a position to deal with this subject without intense discomfort. The growth of the new Mormon history shows that at least a small number of Saints are able to cope with the stress of examination of their antecedents, once time has removed us from those antecedents. But it is still more stressful to examine in any balanced way

people and circumstances more nearly contemporary. Rather than suffer the discomfort, virtually all of us would prefer to dodge it by putting the entire subject at psychological (in lieu of chronological distance. Certainly my experience leads me to doubt that we are anywhere near what I once referred to as the "Copernican revolution" in which we Mormons looked at ourselves honestly as in the grip of a culture of our own. Possibly another generation must pass before even a small, viable group of students is able to consider these matters with the necessary perspective.

Notice: If you desire to complete your files, you may request past copies of this Newsletter. I will send them to you at no cost.