

NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MORMON LIFE

Vol. 8, No. 1

April, 1986

It is election time again. Under our Constitution (Article VI, Section 4), we are to hold an election for new officers every two years. Officers will assume their posts beginning in September. We must elect a new Vice-President, three council members, and a Secretary-Treasurer. Wilford Smith is our current Vice President and is President-Elect.

An ad hoc elections committee has nominated a slate of new officers as follows:

President-Elect and
Vice-President:

Donald B. Lindsey,
C.S.U., San Bernardino

Secretary-Treasurer:

Joseph A. Olsen
Brigham Young University

Council Members:

Tim B. Heaton
Brigham Young University

George K. Jarvis
University of Alberta-Edmonton

Gordon Shepherd
University of Central Arkansas

The enclosed ballot permits you to vote individually for the members nominated above or to write in the name of any alternative candidate whom you may prefer for any of the offices.

According to our constitution, only dues paying members can be elected or vote. According to our records several of our members have neglected to send in their dues over the last couple of years. If you have not paid you dues, please be sure to do so before voting.

For your information, a little more about the candidates. . .

Donald B. Lindsey. Donald Lindsey is currently an associate professor in the Criminal

Justice Department. He has been interested in research on Mormons for several years. Some of you may have caught his article in JSSR on the Mormon concept of Mother in Heaven. His most recent research in the Sociology of Religion will be reported at the upcoming PSA meetings in Denver: "Rating the Prime Time Preachers: An Experiment". Joseph A. Olsen. Joe has worked for several years in the Research and Evaluation Division at LDS Church headquarters. He has recently returned to school at BYU to complete a Ph.D. While he maintains active interest in the sociology of Mormonism, he is also interested in work on identity development in youth, and the effectiveness of current social policy with regards to the prevention of adolescent pregnancy.

Tim B. Heaton. Over the past five years, Tim Heaton has involved in research on Mormons in the United States, Great Britain, Mexico, and Japan. He is an associate professor of sociology at BYU with a joint appointment in the Department of Sociology and the Family and Demographic Research Institute. Tim also gave our first SSSML lecture this spring. (Read more about the lecture later in the newsletter).

George K. Jarvis. George Jarvis is a professor of sociology at The University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. His work on Mormonism includes a 1977 study of the mortality of Mormons in Alberta, a recent article on religion and its effect on mortality differentials, and a forthcoming book with Tim Heaton on the Religions of Canada.

Gordon Shepherd. Gordon, along with his brother Gary, is best known as the author of *A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism*. He too has had a long association with SSSML and is interested in promoting the study of Mormons and Mormonism. I understand he and his brother Gary have now set out to examine the missionary program of the LDS Church. Gordon is a professor of sociology at the University of Central Arkansas.

NEWSLETTER HAS NEW EDITOR

David Buerger of Santa Clara, California has offered his services as the newsletter editor. We have also asked Armand Mauss to be our SSSML correspondent and to work with him. They will begin next fall when the new slate of officers take office.

PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES

The SSSML dues are only \$3.00 per year. In the past that money has been used primarily for the newsletter. But in addition SSSML has always depended upon the kindness of Sociology departments around the country to help pay mailing costs. This year we have depleted our resources somewhat by sponsoring the SSSML Lecture. We offered an honorarium and there are always advertising costs. In order for SSSML to continue actively supporting research on Mormonism we need to receive your dues. Please help us out. Remember, only \$3.00.

SSSML LECTURE SERIES INITIATED

Tim Heaton was chosen by our council members to give the first lecture in what we hope will be a series of lectures designed to encourage the development of a Sociology of Mormonism. The lecture was entitled "The Four C's of the Mormon Family: Chastity, Conjugalilty, Children, and Chauvinism."

Drawing from several data sources, Dr. Heaton suggested that Mormon families are unique in at least four ways: Mormons are less likely to engage in premarital sex, are more likely to marry and less likely to divorce, have more children, and are more likely to believe in traditional male-female divisions of labor.

He suggested that the patterns of family life are not independent but are linked with others by theology, social structure, and demographic constraints. The Mormon doctrine of pre-mortal existence and eternal families provides an ideological foundation for these patterns which is reinforced by a strong social network encouraging conformity to Mormon norms and by demographic linkages between premarital chastity, high marriage and remarriage rates, marital stability, larger families, gender division of labor, and patriarchal authority.

Dr. Heaton suggests that these four areas of family life are highly interrelated and are supported by theological, demographic, and social bases within Mormonism itself.

Those who wish to have a copy of the paper should write to Professor Tim Heaton, Family and Demographic Research Institute, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602. The lecture will be published in a forthcoming book edited by Darwin Thomas, also at Brigham Young. The book will be titled *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives* and will be published by the Religious Studies Center at BYU.

FUTURE SSSML LECTURES?????

Our new SSSML President will likely continue the lecture series concept in 1987 and 1988, so be thinking of possible topics you may want to cover. In addition, if you live in an area where interest in such a lecture series may be high, let us know. We don't want all the lectures to be held in Provo at BYU. B. Y. Card has talked with us about a lecture in Canada and we are exploring options.

NEW PUBLICATIONS:

Darwin L. Thomas, *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986.

Several of the chapters in this book deal specifically with the sociology of Mormon life. The book discusses the nature of the family and religion interface from a social science perspective. Included in the book will be the SSSML lecture and a chapter which examines the influence of parents, peers, and the Church in the religious socialization of Latter-day Saints.

Twenty articles are grouped into three sections. The first section analyzes the religion/family interface in a changing social order. The current interest in religion and the family is situated historically within the rise of the social sciences with treatises of Mormon, Catholic, Jewish and Protestant families. The second section analyzes socialization processes and outcomes by looking at family formation among Mormons; family, peer and church influences on religious belief and practice; child rearing attitudes as they relate to parents' religious views; and gender roles and religious orientations. The final section treats families and religions as central elements in large world views.

Gay R. Davis, Developmental patterns of stress and coping: Middle Age and Older Adulthood, Unpublished dissertation, University of Washington.

This dissertation is based on data collected from over 200 Mormons living in the Lynnwood Washington Stake. The study supports the contention that stress and coping are best understood from a life-span or developmental perspective. In addition, it provides important data regarding the role of spiritual/religious coping behavior in dealing with normal life events. The data suggested that religious and spiritual coping strategies were some of the most frequently used and rated as most highly effective in coping with stressors.

Shupe, Anson and John Heinerman, "Mormonism and the New Christian Right: An Emerging Coalition?" Review of Religious Research, December 1985.

This paper was critically reviewed by Brinkerhoff, et. al, at the PSA meetings in New Mexico last spring. Brinkerhoff, among other things, presented data suggesting a high level of social distance between Mormons and Conservative Christians. This social distance, according to Brinkerhoff, is hardly the kind of bonding agent needed to forge a working coalition.

Cornwall, Marie, Stan L. Albrecht, Perry H. Cunningham, and Brian L. Pitcher, "The Dimensions of Religiosity: A Conceptual Model and Empirical Test" Review of Religious Research, March 1986.

This article is based on data collected from 900 Mormons in the United States. It is probably the most comprehensive study of "how Mormons are religious" to date.

Heinerman, John and Anson Shupe, The Mormon Corporate Empire, Beacon Press.

This book is controversial to say the least. Tim Heaton offers the following comments:

Many of you have been introduced to a study of Mormons by Anson Shupe (University of Texas at Arlington) and John Heinerman (Anthropological Research Center, Salt Lake City) by an article which appeared in the December (1985) issue of *Review of Religious Research*. For those who haven't, this article maintains there is an emerging coalition between the Mormon Church and the New Christian Right. This is not simply an agreement on certain "hot" political issues, but a full fledged cooperative enterprise. On the Mormon side, the organizational base for this coalition is the Freemen Institute. The article documents the right wing activities of this institute, as well as its ties with key figures in the LDS Church and the Moral Majority. The authors also point out possible advantages and disadvantages to each group of forming such a coalition. The paper points to some interesting possibilities, but those of us who see the Freemen Institute as a peripheral group, at best, would like to see more convincing documentation.

The analysis of Heinerman and Shupe continues in their book *THE MORMON CORPORATE EMPIRE*, recently published by Beacon Press. According the advertisement, this volume offers "a hard-hitting inside look at the Mormon Church and its political and financial agenda". "The authors document the often quiet but efficient ways in which the Mormon Church has sought to extend its economic, political, and theological influence into nearly every sector of American life, from communications to the CIA, from government to the military." The motivational force behind this acquisition of power is to replace our present democratic form of government in the U.S. with a theocracy preparatory to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. The LDS Church should thus be viewed as a serious threat to pluralism and democracy.

The utilization of evidence in the book is nearly as mind-boggling as the central thesis. For example, the authors estimate LDS Church assets at eight billion dollars, claiming that this vast corporate wealth provides muscle for political and economic influence. In the first place, the figure pales in comparison with the hundreds of billions the U.S. actually spends on defense each year. Moreover, most of the assets consist of church buildings and associated land.

Here I must resist the temptation to prepare a formal book review. No doubt, the research by Shupe and Heinerman will generate some controversy. Given that much of their analysis is qualitative in nature, it would be interesting to add to their data bank with comments by members of SSML. We would appreciate any comments you have concerning this new research on Mormons.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

Over the past several years, SSSML has sponsored sessions at PSA, ASA, and at the Sunstone Symposium. This year we did not have a sufficient number of papers to sponsor separate sessions at PSA and ASA. However, one paper will be presented at PSA and SSSML will sponsor a session at Sunstone East and at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt

Lake City. Stan L. Albrecht and Marie Cornwall of Brigham Young University will be presenting a paper titled "Leaving Mormonism: Disengagement and Disaffiliation" at PSA. In addition, Darwin L. Thomas and Marie Cornwall will be presenting a paper titled "Educate the Mormons and You Increase Their Faith, Why?" at Sunstone East. Those of you who are working on research on the Sociology of Mormon Life should be thinking about presenting at PSA or ASA next year. Let Wilford Smith know and he will get something on these programs for 1987.