

The Decline and Possible Fall of the American Republic

*Commencement Address
President Ernest L. Wilkinson
Brigham Young University
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In accordance with a decision made a few years ago by the Brethren that instead of having an outside Commencement speaker it would be appropriate for me, as President, to review the year's work and give whatever other message seemed proper, last night I told you something about the graduating class, and tonight I propose to discuss with you the decline and possible fall of the American Republic.

If that statement seems abrupt or shocking to you, may I remind you that as Benjamin Franklin was emerging from the Convention which brought forth our Constitution, some women tugged at his coat and asked him what had been proposed for the American people. He replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it."

Later on the wise Franklin said that he thought the government they had given to the people would "likely . . . be well administered for a course of years," but that it "can only end in despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic government, being incapable of any other."¹

I have chosen to speak on this critical subject for three reasons:

1. I cannot help but believe that the American Republic, which was set up under divine inspiration by our constitutional Fathers, is fast being subverted into a socialist despotism which has already largely become and will eventually further become our master rather than our servant.
2. I believe that in times of national and world crisis it is the duty of a university president to speak forth boldly in behalf of what he considers to be the truth, knowing full well that what he will say will be unpopular in some quarters.
3. I believe that as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a reservoir of knowledge founded on revelation and the advice of our prophets, which if heeded, may yet permit us to save the Republic created by our Constitutional Fathers. Confessing that my own generation has failed you in preserving and strengthening the Constitution, I want to make sure that you who are graduating are pointedly advised of some of the prophetic utterances of our leaders with the hope that you many help stem the tide that is now engulfing our country.

To guard against any accusation that what I say will represent only the views of Ernest Wilkinson, I am going to talk to you, not in my words, but in the language of the prophets themselves. Should you therefore disagree with what the prophets say, it will not be a disagreement with me, but an unwillingness on your part to follow the counsel of those whom we have sustained as our leaders and whom we have promised to support and follow.

1 Benjamin Franklin, Elliott's Debates 5:554.

In this respect Brigham Young informed us that it was the duty of the Prophets to advise us on temporal as well as spiritual matters and that the two are inseparably connected.² President John Taylor advised that the elders of Israel should

. . . understand that they have something to do with the world politically as well as religiously, that it is as much their duty to study correct political principles as well as religious.³

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. . . that besides the preaching of the Gospel, we have another mission, namely, the perpetuation of the free agency of man and the maintenance of liberty, freedom, and the rights of man.^{4, 5}

The main purpose of our Constitutional Fathers was to create a Republic which would protect Americans from the tyrannies of foreign governments and any proposed tyranny or domination by their own government. Their dislike of government domination was expressed by none other than George Washington, the father of our country, in these words: “Government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is a force. Like fire it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master.”⁶

2 [*Journal of Discourses*, 10:363-4.](#)

3 [*Journal of Discourses*, 9:340.](#)

4 [*Journal of Discourses*, 23:63.](#)

5 I know that there are some who try to differentiate between advice given by our leaders on religious matters and advice which they allege pertains to political matters. As to this unwarranted differentiation may I merely say that by revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants we are commanded “to live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” ([D&C 84:44](#)). The Lord further instructed us that whether this advice be by “mine own voice or the voice of my servants, it is the same” ([D&C 1:38](#)).

In direct response to the contention that the prophets should confine themselves to “spiritual” rather than “temporal” things, Brigham Young stated that no man could draw a line of demarcation among the two. Continuing, he said: “I defy any man on earth to point out the path a Prophet of God should walk in, or point out his duty and just how far he must go in dictating temporal and spiritual things. Temporal and spiritual things are inseparably connected and ever will be” ([*Journal of Discourses*, 10:363-4](#)).

There are others who say that our leaders should confine themselves to discussions of the four standard works of the Church. In one of the early meetings of our Church one brother, in the presence of the Prophet Joseph, preached that doctrine stating that those “who give revelations should give revelations according to those books . . .” and “confine ourselves to them. When he concluded, Brother Joseph turned to Brother Brigham and said, ‘Brother Brigham, I want you to take the stand and tell us your views with regard to the living oracles and the written word of God.’ Brother Brigham took the stand, and he took the Bible, and laid it down; he took the Book of Mormon, and laid it down; and he took the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and laid it down before him, and he said: ‘There is the written word of God to us, concerning the work of God from the beginning of the world, almost, to our day. And now,’ said he, ‘when compared with the living oracles those books are nothing to me; those books do not convey the word of God direct to us now, as do the words of a Prophet or a man bearing the Holy Priesthood in our day and generation. I would rather have the living oracles than all the writing in the books. . . .’ When he was through, Brother Joseph said to the congregation: ‘Brother Brigham has told you the word of the Lord, and he has told you the truth’” (Wilford Woodruff, Conference Report 10/97:22-23).

6 George Washington (President 1789-97) as quoted in George Seldes, *The Great Quotations* (New York, Lyle

Accordingly they were careful, after granting certain powers to the central government, to provide that all powers not so expressly granted were reserved to the States and the people. This was the same concept as that expressed by Joseph Smith—that the people should be taught correct principles and that they would govern themselves.

Our Constitutional Fathers went further and made it plain that certain natural and divine rights of man could not be taken from him even by the Congress or the vote of the people. The rights of minorities and the individual were to be protected. That is why they set up for us a constitutional Republic—not a democracy in which the whim of an inflamed majority could be imposed upon the individual. To them protection of the dignity and freedom of the individual man was the end of government.

But within fifty years after the founding of our country certain people began to preach the socialistic concept that instead of the government's being a protector of our liberties, it should become a provider of our economic wants. Robert Owen, of Scotland, for instance, in the days of Joseph Smith, tried to convince Americans that their best interests lay in collective equality rather than individual liberty. In 1824 he bought 30,000 acres of land in Indiana and established his utopian colony of "New Harmony." In his opening address to the pioneer members of the settlement, Owen said:

I am come to this country to introduce an entire new state of society; to change it from an ignorant, selfish system to an enlightened social system which shall gradually unite all interests into one, and remove all causes for contest between individuals.⁷

However, after three years of hard struggle, the experiment, which had taken most of Owen's money, failed. His ideas of collective ownership and the absolute equality of compensation, irrespective of effort or productivity, had proved to be unsound.

Since that time over two hundred other experiments in municipal socialism in this country have also failed.

Now what have our prophets said with respect to these same socialistic concepts? What has been their judgment? One hundred twenty-four years ago the Prophet Joseph, after attending lectures on socialism, made this official entry in his diary: "I said I did not believe the doctrine."⁸

Now at his point may I hurriedly point out a completely mistaken belief on the part of some that Communism, Socialism, and other isms are essentially the same as the United Order. In the language of the First Presidency in a warning issued in 1942:

. . . Communism and all other similar isms bear no relationship whatever to the United Order. . . . Communism debases the individual and makes him the enslaved tool of the state to whom he must look for sustenance and religion; the United Order exalts the individual, leaves him his property, "according to his family, according to his circumstances and his wants and needs" (D&C 51:3) and provides a system by which he helps care for his less fortunate brethren. . . . Communism destroys man's

Stuart, 1960), p. 727.

7 George B. Lockwood, *The New Harmony Movement*, Appleton, Co., New York, 1905, p. 83.

8 *History of the Church*, 6:33.

God-given free agency; the United Order glorifies it. Latter-day Saints cannot be true to their faith and lend aid, encouragement, or sympathy to any of these false philosophies.⁹

President Brigham Young, like the Prophet Joseph, was equally emphatic in rejecting any concept of socialism. he said:

We heard Brother Taylor's exposition of what is called Socialism this morning. What can they (the socialists) do? Live on each other and beg. It is a poor, unwise and very imbecile people who cannot take care of themselves.¹⁰

The third President of the Church, John Taylor, in similarly condemning socialism said it was a "species of robbery."

. . . I cannot conceive upon what principles of justice, the children of the idle and profligate have a right to put their hands into the pockets of those who are diligent and careful, and rob them of their purse. Let this principle exist, and all energy and enterprise would be crushed.¹¹

President Joseph F. Smith, in denouncing a current prevalent view that a majority has the right to impose its will upon the minority, said:

We cannot tolerate the sentiment at one time expressed, by a man, high in authority in the nation. He said: "The Constitution be damned; the popular sentiment of the people is the Constitution!" That is the sentiment of anarchism that . . . is spreading over "the land of liberty and home of the brave." We do not tolerate it, . . . It means destruction. It is the spirit of mobocracy, and the Lord knows we have suffered enough from mobocracy, and we do not want any more of it.¹²

President Heber J. Grant deplored the concept of the welfare state in these words:

There are always, I believe, striving with us two spirits, one that is the inspiration of the Lord and one that is not . . . the spirit that inspires work is from our Heavenly Father. *The spirit that would have us get something for nothing is from the lower regions.*¹³

This was followed by a similar denunciation by President George Albert Smith, who said:

9 First Presidency, Conference Report, 4/42:90

10 Brigham Young, 1870, [*Journal of Discourses*, 14:21](#).

11 John Taylor, 1852, *Government of God*, p. 23.

12 President Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, October 1912, pp. 10-11.

13 President Heber J. Grant, The Church Welfare Plan, Albert E. Bowen, 1946, 70.

Most of the nations are losing the liberties they have had because they have not kept the commandments of the Lord. Most of the difficulty is the bid that is made by the leadership of nations to people that if they will follow the plan that the leaders map out, they will be fed and clothed without having to work so hard for it, *but it does not work*.¹⁴

Because in our day we are not only threatened but afflicted with socialism more than at any time since the founding of our Republic, it is only natural that President David O. McKay has condemned this political concept on many occasions.

In 1940 he said:

Today as never before, *the issue is clearly defined—liberty and freedom of choice, or oppression and subjugation for the individual and for nations*.¹⁵

In 1952 he quoted with approval the words of a distinguished industrialist that “during the first half of the Twentieth Century, we have traveled far into the soul-destroying land of Socialism” under “such intriguing and misapplied labels as ‘social justice,’ ‘equality,’ ‘reform,’ ‘patriotism,’ and ‘social welfare.’”¹⁶

President McKay gave utterance to his own views in these words:

We must not let complacency blind our eyes to the real dangers threatening to destroy us. Judging from the written and expressed opinion of many of our leaders, our government is facing the greatest crisis in its history.¹⁷

In 1953 President McKay again Warned:

We are placed on this earth to work . . . to strive to till the earth, subdue matter, conquer the glebe, take care of the flocks and the herds. It is the government’s duty to see that you are protected in (this work) . . . but *it is not the government’s duty to support you*.

I shall raise my voice as long as God gives me sound or ability, against *the communistic idea that the government will take care of us all*, and that everything belongs to the government.

14 President George Albert Smith, Conference Report, 10/50:7.

15 President David O. McKay, Conference Report 10/40:104.

16 President David O. McKay, Church News, Mar. 12, 1952, p. 14.

17 President David O. McKay, Church News, Mar. 12, 1952, p. 2

No government owes you a living. *You get it yourself by your own acts*—never by trespassing upon the rights of your neighbor, never by cheating him. You put a blemish upon your character the moment you do.¹⁸

Time will not permit me to quote many other church leaders. I have quotations from Charles W. Penrose and Anthony W. Ivins, both counselors to President Grant, from President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., one of two persons to be a counselor to three Presidents (Presidents Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, and David O. McKay), from Presidents Stephen L. Richards and Henry D. Moyle, counselors to President McKay, and others. All I can do with respect to them is to ask leave to revise and extend my remarks. Should there be a sufficient demand for this talk, I will mail a copy to each graduate with these added quotations, which I have done in Appendix A.¹⁹

Suffice it here to say that so far as I have been able to ascertain, our prophets, their counselors and members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles have been unanimous in condemning Communism, Socialism, and any other ism which exalts the power of the state over the liberty of the individual. These leaders have differed in their political allegiances, but they have never differed in their condemnation of the demoralizing influence on individual character of any of these state isms.

The correct viewpoint for you graduates was declared eloquently by Elder Harold B. Lee, some twenty years ago, in these words:

I want to say with all the sincerity within my soul that there is more guarantee of security in the intelligent will, initiative and determined independence of the American youth of today than in all the laws that Congress may make intended to provide us with insurance from the “cradle to the grave.” Men who are dreaming of that kind of a security are not the kind that pioneered this country and explored the unknown. They are not the ones who built the world of today nor will they be the builders of the “new” world of tomorrow of which they speak. They are as someone has said, “Only tenants in houses of other men’s dreams.”²⁰

In a conference address given in 1961, Elder Ezra Taft Benson, in condemning Communism, Socialism and other similar governmental isms, quoted from George Bernard Shaw to illustrate how these concepts deprive us of our free agency. Shaw, one of the original founders of the Fabian Society, made this frank disclosure of their reliance on the ruthless power of the state (views which you will immediately recognize as analogous to those of Lucifer rather than those of Christ), in the following words:

I also made it quite clear that under Socialism you would no be allowed to be poor. You would be forcibly fed, clothed, lodged, taught and employed whether you liked it or not. If it were discovered that you had not character and industry enough to be

18 President David O. McKay, Church News, Mar. 14, 1953, pp. 4, 15.

19 These quotations are included as Appendix A to this address.

20 George E. Sokolsky, Harold B. Lee, Church News, June 23, 1945.

worth all this trouble, *you might possibly be executed in a kindly manner*; but whilst you were permitted to live you would have to live well.²¹

With all of these prophetic utterances being condemnatory of the current trend in our nation I come directly to the prophecy attributed to the Prophet Joseph that the Constitution of the United States would hang by a single thread, but be saved by the Elders of Israel.

Four individuals have attested to this prophecy: Brigham Young, Jedediah M. Grant, Orson Hyde, and Eliza R. Snow. All of them agreed that Joseph Smith said in substance that the time would come when the Constitution would be in danger and hang by a single thread; three of them thought he said that the Saints would step forth and save it; the fourth remembered him saying, “If the Constitution *be saved at all* it will be by the Elders of this Church.”²²

Now, let’s face the question of whether the Constitution is today hanging by a single thread and the extent to which our Republic is in danger of going the way of some seventeen or more civilizations which have come and gone, not because of conquest from without, but primarily because of political decay from within.

One does not need to look very far or long to see evidences of moral decay in America. And we should always remember that “Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” ([Proverbs 14:34](#)).

The extent of this decay may be illustrated by a hurried reference to certain phases of our national life.

21 George B. Shaw, *Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, p. 470.

22 The first reference to substantiate this important prophecy was given in a sermon by President Brigham Young in the Old Tabernacle on the Temple Block on independence Day, July 4, 1854. In the course of his address he said: “Will the Constitution be destroyed? No. It will be held inviolate by this people; and as Joseph Smith said, ‘the time will come when the destiny of this nation will hang upon a single thread, and at this critical juncture, this people will step forth and save it from the threatened destruction.’ It will be so.” (*Journal History*, July 4, 1854 – Quoted in *Deseret News* on December 15, 1948, Christmas News.)

On February 6 and 7 of the following year, 1855, a celebration was held in the Social Hall, by the surviving members of the Mormon Battalion to commemorate their long march to the Pacific, made in 1846-47. On this occasion President Jedediah M. Grant spoke of the same prophecy in the following language: “We are friendly to our country, and when we speak of the flag of our Union, we love it, and we love the rights the Constitution guarantees to every citizen. What did the Prophet Joseph say? When the Constitution shall be tottering, we shall be the people to save it from the hand of the foe.” (*The Mormon Battalion*, Tyler, p. 350)

Three years later, on January 3, 1858, Orson Hyde was speaking in the Old Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. At that time he made this significant statement: “It is said that Brother Joseph in his lifetime declared that the Elders of this Church should step forth at a particular time when the Constitution should be in danger, and rescue it and save it. This may be so; but I do not recollect that he said exactly so. I believe he said something like this – that the time would come when the Constitution and the country would be in danger of an overthrow; and said he, ‘If the Constitution be saved at all, it will be by the Elders of the Church.’ I believe this is about the language, as nearly as I can recollect it.” ([Journal of Discourses, Vol. 6:152](#))

Two years later, Eliza R. Snow, President of the Relief Society, gave her version of the prophecy in these words: “I heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say . . . that the time would come when this nation would so far depart from its original purity, its glory and love of freedom, and its protection of civil rights and religious rights, that the Constitution of our country would hang as it were by a thread. He said also that this people, the sons of Zion, would rise up and save the Constitution and bear it off triumphantly.” (*Deseret News Weekly*, Jan. 19, 1870, p. 556)

1. *Increase in Crime.* According to a report released recently by J. Edgar Hoover, there was a nation-wide increase of 13 percent in the crime index in 1964. The F.B.I. estimates that by 1970 serious crimes in this country may increase from the present level of 2,500,000 to 4,000,000.^{23, 24}
2. *Juvenile Delinquency.* The picture is even darker as respects juvenile delinquency. From 1940 to 1958 juvenile delinquency had increased 100 percent compared with a population growth of only 25 percent.^{25, 26}
3. *Increase in Immorality.* The story is even worse as respects illegitimate births. In 1940 there were 89,500 of these in the United States. By 1962 this figure had shockingly increased to 245,000. During this same 22-year period, the rate of illegitimacy among 15 to 19-year-old girls increased from 40,500 to 94,000.²⁷
4. *Increase in Divorce.* The story of divorces is also pathetic. Recently a professor in one of our American institutions, a naturalized Asiatic, announced he was taking a year's leave of absence to return to his native land to select, in accordance with the custom of that country, a husband for his sister. When questioned as to why he still followed the practice of a country whose nationality he had renounced, he replied that marriages in his native land under their ancient practice were much more successful than those in America, where at least one out of every four ends in divorce—that our Western method did not even make sense.
5. *Increase in Public Welfare Recipients.* The increase in number of people on the welfare rolls is even more appalling. From 1954 to 1964 the population of the United States increased 18 percent, whereas the number on relief in our country increased 42 percent, and in times of so-called prosperity.²⁸

23 *Uniform Crime Reporting*, 1964 Preliminary Annual Release (for Release Wed. a.m., Mar. 10, 1965), issued by J. Edgar Hoover, Director, F.B.I., U.S. Dept. of Justice, Wash. D.C., p. 1.

24 The crimes of violence increased in every category: murder, an increase of 9%; aggravated assault, up 18%; forcible rape, up 19%; robbery, up 12%. The property crimes also continued the upward swing. Auto thefts were up 16%; larceny up 13%; burglary, up 12% (*Ibid.*).

25 Utah State Legislative Council (Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency—in cooperation with Utah Training Center for the Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency), "Juvenile Delinquency in Utah—A Survey of Problems and Resources," November 1964, p. 8 (Mimeo-brochure)

26 In our own State of Utah we had 10,073 juveniles appearing in our courts in 1963 as compared to only 4,274 in 1953, and the rate of juvenile offenses increased in the same ten-year period from 53.7 per thousand to 85.3—an increase of 62 percent in only one decade (*Ibid.*).

27 *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* 1964, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, p. 52, Table 54.

28 From 1954 to 1964 the population of the United States increased from 162,400,000 to 192,100,000, or 18%. During this same decade the number of people on relief in our country increased from 5,500,000 to 7,800,000, or 42%. In New York City alone, an additional 6,000 persons go on relief each month.

The costs for these welfare rolls in New York City have also increased rapidly, rising from \$2.7 billion in 1954 to \$5.1 billion in 1964, an increase of 90 percent in the last ten years. From 1954 to 1964 the number of welfare cases in this area has increased 104 percent from 1,984,000 in 1954 to 4,056,000 in 1964.

The immense cost of these federal, state, and local "public-aid payments" has increased from \$1,200,000,000 in

Now let us look at the governmental demoralization of our time, a decadence resulting from the prevailing political philosophy that the government rather than our God and our own effort is the source of our economic and spiritual strength—that the government by mandate of law rather than the individual by righteous living can cure the ills of the world—the plan of Lucifer which was rejected in the Spirit World but which the people of this country have now largely accepted as a mode of life.

Time will permit me only to discuss four trends in our government which, if permitted to continue, could spell the end of our Constitution and Republic.

Income Tax and Its Abuse

The first of these is the income tax and its abuse. The adoption of this amendment was probably the most significant legislation of this century. Up until that time the Supreme Court of the United States held that an income tax in this country was unconstitutional because it was a direct tax, and the power to levy direct taxes had been reserved to the states.²⁹

In 1912, however, deeming ourselves wiser than our great predecessors, we amended the Constitution of the United States so as to permit an almost unlimited income tax.

A review of the debates in the Congress when this amendment was adopted, shows that many voted for it on the theory that an income tax would never be levied “in time of peace” but that it was necessary “to provide an income adequate for the carrying on of war”;³⁰ others were thinking in terms of a very small income tax, beginning at the nominal rate of 1/10th of 1% on incomes of \$100 per annum.³¹ One of the questions debated was whether corporations should be taxed 1% or 2% of their net profits.³²

1946 to \$5,100,000,000 in 1964, and this *does not* include the \$25,000,000,000 spent in 1964 in such related programs as Social Security pensions, unemployment compensation, and aid to veterans (*U.S. News and World Report*, Mar. 8, 1965, p. 40).

The abuses of our public welfare programs are scandalous. Not long ago two women and a girl of 14 appeared in a Philadelphia, Pa., courtroom. The women were the girl’s mother and grandmother. All lived together in a small apartment, all were unmarried, and all had been made pregnant by the same man. They were in court to testify against him. One more common fact linked them: public welfare was supporting all three, and public welfare would support their children (“Why the Dole Doesn’t Work,” *Reader’s Digest*, Mar., 1965, p. 79).

“Rhode Island reports that one of its welfare families has drawn \$50,000 from the public coffers, with no end in sight.

“In Philadelphia, one hard-core relief clan, with all the generations and the aunts and uncles, costs taxpayers \$16,000 a year in welfare funds” (“Why the Dole Doesn’t Work,” *Reader’s Digest*, Mar., 1965, p. 80).

“Cecil Moore, a Negro Lawyer and the head of the NAACP in Philadelphia, says, ‘Go down into the area of my city where most of the relief people live. Hardly anyone there has any pride in himself. That’s what public assistance has done for them. To me, relief is a self-perpetuating degradation, the worst things that could have happened to my race’” (“Why the Dole Doesn’t Work,” *Reader’s Digest*, Mar., 1965, p. 83).

29 Pollock v. Farmers Loan and Trust Company, 188 U.S. 601.

30 44 Cong. R. 4390-4391

31 44 Cong. 4414-4415

Later, when the first income tax was adopted, Cordell Hull, one of the Congressional leaders, explained it by saying that if a citizen “has prospered, he is required to contribute to his government, not the scriptural tithing (10%) but a small percentage of his net profits.”³³

You and I know that these statesmen, unlike the prophets, had no gift of prophecy through which they could view the future. Consequently, we have had individual income taxes during peace times that were as high as 91% in the upper brackets, and in war times practically 100%. And corporations with incomes of over \$25,000, instead of being taxed 2%, have until recently been taxed 52%.³⁴

Usurpation of Power by Supreme Court

The second trend is what I choose to call the usurpation of power by the United States Supreme Court, a trend so great that that body has become a second unfettered legislative body, for its members are appointed for life. Up until the late 1930's, the consistent interpretation of the Constitution made by the Supreme Court would not have permitted most of the so-called social welfare legislation which has been enacted in the last thirty years. Had these interpretations of the Supreme Court not been disturbed, we would not be confronted with the great hazards to our endurance as a nation which we now face.

But, after 1933, the Supreme court began its long course of appeasement to the executive branch of government. The result is that today instead of all the powers not granted to the federal government being reserved to the states and the people, the states and the people are left only with those powers which an unbridled Supreme Court does not grant to the federal government. Under the alien concepts added to the Constitution, some 150 decisions promulgated over one and one half centuries were reversed by this Supreme Court during the period from 1933 to 1965.³⁵

When the Supreme Court thus abandoned the constitutional concepts of our founding Fathers, the door was opened for the government to enter into all the affairs of our economic life.

On this question I quote from Ben Moreell, former U.S. Admiral, later President of Jones-Laughlin Steel Corporation:

32 44 Cong. R. Part 5, App. A-70

33 50 Cong. R. 505

34 The first income tax under this amendment to the Constitution was enacted, as I remember, in February of 1913. It levied a tax of 1% on the first \$20,000 of a person's income. There were also many exemptions; indeed, so many that a single person with an income of \$5,000 paid the enormous tax of \$20! That was the kind of income tax that our legislators in 1912 thought they were giving to this country (U.S. Statute at Large, Vol. 38, Part I, 63rd Congress, p. 166).

If the legislators had any legitimate basis for thinking that income taxes would not exceed the percentages cited in the debates, why didn't they provide for such a limitation in the amendment? The fact is that they left the amendment wide open so that government, under the guise of income taxes, could take all our income, and if we should now get into a global war, that is about what the government would do under the unprecedented grant of the income tax amendment. But I have doubt as to whether we could repeal our income tax now without repudiating our national debt and that is something which, in the name of national honor, I hope we will never do.

35 Constitution of the U.S.A. Annotated, Senate, Document 39, 88th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 1544-47.

By misusing the “general welfare” and “commerce” clauses of the Constitution, by unwise constitutional amendments which nullify the intent of the founders, by judicial decisions influenced by political expedients and by an abdication by the Congress of its power in favor of the Executive, the advocates of the all-powerful state have erected a too-heavy structure of controls, subsidies and punitive taxation. These have impaired the liberties of the individual to such an extent that many true liberals believe that the cause for which the American Revolution was fought has already been lost.^{36, 37, 38}

Debit Financing

The third trend which places our Constitution and country in great danger is that of deficit financing, which reversed a century and one-half of sound government practice, based on the theory that we should pay as we go. This, you should note, is a companion to our enlarged income taxes and the newly created powers and functions of our federal government, as decreed by our Supreme Court.

During the last 32 years the annual budget of our country has increased from less than \$5 billion to well over \$100 billion. This represents an average increase of over 60 percent for each of the intervening 32 years.

Not only has our budget increased 20 times over, but of more concern, our national debt has increased from \$16 billion to an admitted \$324 billion. This is the amount presently owed by the United States to creditors. If to this be added accrued liabilities payable in the future, our real indebtedness exceeds \$1 trillion. I repeat, \$1 trillion. That represents a terrible and tragic average

36 Ben Moreell on “Moral Responsibility and Liberty” (Address to National Tax Association, Dallas, Texas, November 26k, 1951), p. 8.

37 In the debates over the Constitution the question was raised at that time as to whether the general welfare clause would permit Congress to spend funds at its own discretion. This was later answered in the negative by James Madison, who more than any other man wrote the Constitution: “If Congress can employ money indefinitely to the general welfare, and are the sole and supreme judges of the general welfare, they may take the care of religion into their own hands; they may appoint teachers in every state, county, and parish and pay them out of the public treasury, they may take into their own hands the education of children, establishing in like manner schools throughout the Union; they may assume the provisions of the poor. . . . Were the power of Congress to be established in the latitude contended for, it would subvert the very foundations; and transmute the very nature of the limited government established by the people of America” (James Madison, quoted in the *Dan Smoot Report*, Sept. 9, 1963.).

In our own century this was stated in more general terms by Woodrow Wilson who, prior to being President, had been President of Princeton University. He warned us that “The history of liberty is the history of limitations of governmental power, not the increases of it.” He therefore never wanted to see the little red schoolhouse subordinated to the political thinking of Washington, nor did he, in his own language, “want a group of experts sitting behind closed doors in Washington trying to pray Providence to the American people” (Woodrow Wilson, New York Press Club, May 9, 1912, taken from *The Great Quotations*, George Seldes, 1960, p. 750.).

38 In the early part of the 19th century a French philosopher by the name of Alexis de Toqueville made a study of our form of Government then referred to as a “noble experiment.” In one of his essays on that experiment he said in effect that if the time ever came when the people were permitted to vote themselves monies out of the public treasury, self-government by responsible men would become an impossibility. Yet that is exactly what the Supreme Court, in reversing scores of prior opinions, has now permitted (*Democracy in America*, vol. 1, p. 217, *American Institutions and their Influences*, p. 227.).

indebtedness of \$5,200 for every man, woman and child in the United States, or of over \$40,000 for a good Mormon family of eight.³⁹

The amount of our public debt is beyond our comprehension. If, for instance, we started at the birth of Christ and spent \$1,000 per day until the year 2,000, we would have spent only \$730 million or less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of one billion. Yet there are some who pretend that this is an era of unprecedented prosperity. If so, why do we have to go in debt more than we did during the depression? The plain fact of the matter is that we are living on money which we are borrowing from future generations.^{40, 41}

Should we now get into a global war, with this debt already in existence, it is not at all unlikely that national bankruptcy would be inevitable.

The tragic situation brings to mind the famous statement by Alexander Pope:

Vice is a monster of such frightful mien
That to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.^{42, 43}

39 I give this figure of \$1 trillion on the authority of Honorable Maurice Stans, Director of the Budget during the Eisenhower Administration. While they have been scoffed at by some, no serious attempt has been made to contradict them. On the contrary, they have been confirmed by Honorable Otto E. Passman, Democratic Member of the House and Chairman of the subcommittee in charge of foreign appropriations. Furthermore, they do not even include additional billions of dollars in Federal guarantees of home mortgage loans, bank deposits, savings and loan accounts, or the full amount payable under Social Security, etc.

40 The sad aspect of this deficit spending is that while there may have been justification therefor during the depression of the 30's and during World War II, it has increased and not diminished since that time. Thus, while during the 1930's there were six consecutive years when the government spent \$27 billion more than its income we now learn (Deficit Report of Secretary of Treasury) that from 1961 to 1966 we will spend \$35 billion more than our income.

41 This policy of deficit spending is directly contrary to the advice given by President David O. McKay, who quoted with approval the words of Thomas Jefferson: "To preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must take our choice between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude. If we run into such debts, we must be taxed in our meat and drink, in our necessities and in our comforts, in our labors and in our amusements.

"If we can prevent the Government from wasting the labors of the people under pretense of caring for them, they will be happy. The same prudence which in private life would forbid our paying our money for unexplained projects, forbids it in the disposition of public money. We are endeavoring to reduce the Government to the practice of rigid economy to avoid burdening the people and arming the magistrate with a patronage of money which might be used to corrupt the principles of our Government" (David O. McKay, Conference Report 4/50:35-36).

42 Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, Epistle II, Lines 217-220.

43 Now I know there are many who urge that our national indebtedness is not serious because our gross national income is increasing faster than our indebtedness. But this reasoning proceeds on the socialistic premise, which unfortunately is now true, that the Government has the right to commandeer all of our income for its socialistic purposes. That postulate assumes of course the supremacy of the state and the servility of the individual. This we cannot accept if we are to remain free men.

Loss of Freedom

The fourth suicidal trend resulting from the first three—confiscatory taxation, judicial usurpation, and fiscal insanity—is the loss of our freedom in this country—past, present, and future.

The sad fact is that nearly every law that is today being passed is aimed at an enlargement of governmental powers and a curtailment of individual liberties, but because each law only pertains to a certain group there is no organized opposition. The government wins by dividing and conquering.

Summarily stated, a rough measure of eroded freedom consists of the amount of money that is taken from citizens by the government, and today the sad fact is that 40 cents out of every dollar is taken by local, state, and federal governments for tax purposes.

Admitting that in any society there are necessary taxes for protection from our enemies and for the purposes enumerated in the Constitution, Professor Colin Clark, of Oxford University, a noted Australian economist, has recently informed us that no nation which over any substantial period of time takes more than 25 percent of the national income in taxation can survive as a free and independent nation—that it will inevitably become a socialistic state.

Lest you be unaware of the extent of the present social revolution and the change in our content of government, let me introduce some authorities as to just how socialistic we have become.

I call as my chief witness, Norman Thomas, for many years Socialist candidate for President of the United States. After seeing one by one the principles of his party adopted by others, he retired as the perennial Socialist candidate for President, intimating that it was no longer necessary for the Socialist Party to continue.

I call as my second witness Mr. Earl Browder, former leader of the Communist Party in America, who, in a pamphlet published in 1950, stated that socialism was further advanced in the United States than in Socialist Britain,^{44, 45} that although we did not have governmental ownership, real control by Government was much greater in the United States than in Britain.

These statements of Socialist Thomas and Communist Browder were made or published fifteen years ago. Since that time we have gone much, much farther down the road of statism.

To bring you down to date I call as my final witness the present President of the United States. In a speech to senior citizens last year, he boldly stated: “We are going to try to take all the money we think is unnecessarily being spent and take it from the ‘haves’ and give it to the ‘have nots’ that need it so much.”⁴⁶

This is the code under which the state will take from you your property, and determine how it will be spent and to whom it will be given—a theory of government which was expressly

44 Earl Browder, *State Capitalism and Progress* (Part I of *Keynes, Foster and Marx*; 2 Parts; Yonkers, New York, Earl Browder, 1950) pp. 29-30.

45 “State capitalism leaped forward to a new high point in America in the decade 1939-49 . . . State capitalism, in substance if not in formal aspects, has progressed farther in America than in Great Britain under the labor Government . . . *the actual, substantial, concentration of the guiding reins* of national economy in governmental hands is probably on a higher level in the U.S.A.” (*Ibid.*)

46 Statement to Senior Citizens at White House, January 15, 1964 (News release from White House).

rejected by our Constitutional Fathers in favor of the concept of freedom and individual responsibility.

I now return to my statement at the outset, that I was going to discuss with you—the decline and possible fall of the American Republic. We who have had the blessings of liberty given to us and who have never had to fight for them even though we may have assisted other countries in defending their freedom, take liberty, I fear, for granted. But I think I have produced enough evidence tonight to show you that already we are living under an entirely different government than that vouchsafed to us by our Constitutional Fathers. The downfall of that government has already occurred. Oh, of course the outward forms are the same—we still have a president, a Supreme Court and a Congress, but in many areas they proceed on entirely different premises than our Fathers intended. In the words of Dean Inge:

History seems to show that the powers of evil have won their greatest triumphs by capturing the organizations which were formed to defeat them, and that when the devil has thus changed the contents of the bottles, he never alters the labels. The fort may have been captured by the enemy, but it still flies the flag of its defenders.⁴⁷

In an address given at a General Conference of the Church in 1941 the late Bishop Joseph L. Wirthlin stated that “. . . there has been an apostasy from those divinely given principles of Government which have been transmitted to us by the inspired men who founded this great nation.”⁴⁸

President Grant immediately endorsed every word of what he had said “with all my heart.”⁴⁹

I know it may shock some of you to think that in a day when America is the leading power of the world, when Washington, D.C., has more influence than all other capitols of the world put together, when the slightest hint from Washington helps to shape the policy of any country in the world either for or against, I should be talking of the decline or fall of our nation. But I remind you that when Rome was decaying within, she thought she was invulnerable because there were still the Roman legions, the Roman swords, the Roman culture and Roman law everywhere in the world. Indeed, Rome occupied a greater place of leadership in that day than does our own country today. But Rome was doomed, and why? Because she had substituted the false gods of Mammon and government for the true God of personal responsibility, integrity and self-reliance. Hence decay and corruption were inevitable. It was the boast of proud Augustus Caesar that he found a Rome of brick and left it of marble. But he also found the Romans free, and he left them slaves. He found the Romans hard-working, self-reliant and self-supporting; he left them indolent, dependent on the state for their sustenance and for subsidies.

The same has happened to other civilizations when they were at the height of their power. A period of moral decay accompanied by governmental control of the economic life of the nation, wrecked Babylonia.

47 Dean Inge, as quoted by Admiral Ben Moreell, November 22, 1963. found in *Prophets, Principles, and National Survival*, Jerreld L. Newquist, p. 339.

48 Bishop Joseph L. Wirthlin, Conference Report 10/41:70.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

. . . Governmental extravagance and a bloated bureaucracy killed individual initiative and led to the fall of ancient Greece . . . the welfare state of the Incas became so debilitated as to become easy prey for Pizarro and his “conquistadores.” In its turn, the great Spanish Empire broke when the throne so regimented every activity that no one could earn a living except by being a public employee, a priest, or a sailor. For the same reasons the British Empire is now dissolving before our eyes.⁵⁰

The plight of these countries when at the zenith of their power is already our plight with respect to a large part of our population, and unless there is repentance and moral regeneration among the American people we could find history tragically repeating itself as to our whole nation.

Robert Muntzel has informed us that

Great nations rise and fall—the people go from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency, from dependency back again into bondage.⁵¹

If you as graduates of this institution are willing to enlist in a crusade to save America, either as Elders of Christ’s Church or as citizens of the greatest free Republic in the World’s history, then I suggest your acceptance and performance of the following code:

1. To recognize and acknowledge in all things the power, authority, and providence of Almighty God, the bestower of human liberty.
2. To practice personal responsibility as an essential counterpart of personal liberty, and to understand that this provides the ultimate support of our system of free government.
3. To support faithfully the Constitution of the United States, with its great principles of limited government and national independence, regardless of the party with which you are affiliated; and
4. To defend and encourage the right to own and manage private property, and to manage your own affairs.

These, I submit, are the sound principles which should unite all Americans, in spirit and in practice, regardless of creed, color, race, sex, or political party affiliation. Unfortunately, there are some among us who are more interested in the siren songs of the welfare state than in these guiding beacon lights of freedom.

Therefore, I leave it to you to determine for yourselves whether we are at that stage in our history when the Constitution hangs by a single thread.

50 Spruille Braden (U.S. Ambassador, Columbia 1939-42; Cuba, 1942-45), “Ethics and Public Service” (Address before American Political Science Association in New York, 1951).

51 Robert Muntzel, *Manage Magazine* (January, 1961), This “Cycle of Civilization” was originally taken from an Italian scholar named Giambattista Vico, whose “Cycle of Civilization” from barbarism to and through civilization and back again to dispersion or barbarism was developed in the early 18th century. This same idea was subsequently developed in an elaborate form by Oswald Spengler in his book entitled *The Decline of the West*.

I close with the statement made by President McKay in adjourning the last General Conference of the church (April 1965) which to those with any discernment could not help but be a denunciation of the policies advocated in our society today. The President said:

The whole purpose of the organization of this great Church, . . . is to bless the individual. How that stands out in striking contrast, . . . to the claim of the communists who say that the individual is but a spoke in the wheel of the state; that the state is all in all; the individual being but a contributing factor to the perpetuation and strength of the state.

That idea is diametrically opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus sought for a perfect society by perfecting the individual. He recognized the fallacy in the dream of those who hoped to make a perfect society out of imperfect individuals. In all His labors and associations, He sought the perfection of the individual.⁵²

While President McKay in this quotation refers specifically to Communism, he has said essentially the same with respect to any concept that deprives the individual of his free agency.

A great society can never be created by governmental paternalism. It can only be created by free men of industry, integrity and deep spiritual conviction, who in the words of Grover Cleveland, believe it is their duty to support their country but never the duty of their country to support them.^{53, 54}

52 Church news, April 10, 1965, p. 15.

53 President Grover Cleveland, *Essays on Liberty* 3:254 (Veto of Texas Seed Bill, February 16, 1887).

54 In his famous book *Democracy in America*, written just five years after the founding of our Church, de Tocqueville said: "The citizen of the United States is taught from his earliest infancy to rely upon his own exertions in order to resist the evils and difficulties in life; . . . he only claims its assistance when he is quite unable to shift without it. . . .

When a private individual meditates an undertaking, however directly connected it may be with the welfare of society, he never thinks of soliciting the cooperation of the government, but he publishes his plan, offers to execute it himself, courts the assistance of other individuals, and struggles manfully against all obstacles. Undoubtedly he is often less successful than the state might have been in his position; but in the end the sum of these private undertakings far exceeds all that the government could have done" (Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835, *Democracy in America*, 1:97; Newquist, p. 167).

God grant that through righteous living,⁵⁵ hard work, and adherence to fundamental principles of liberty,⁵⁶ we may save the Constitution and our great Republic. These blessings I ask for you and our Country in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.⁵⁷

55 “I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers, and it was not there; in her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and it was not there; in her rich mines and her vast world commerce, and it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. *America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great*” (Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835, *Democracy in America*; Newquist, p. 60).

56 Woodrow Wilson, almost a half century ago pointed out the path for us to follow in these words:

“When we resist the concentration of power, we are resisting the powers of death because concentration of power is what always proceeds the destruction of human liberties” (Woodrow Wilson, Address to New York Press Club, May 19, 1912 *Great Quotations*, by George Seldes, p. 750).

57 I am indebted to Mr. Jerreld L. Newquist for some of the source references relating to quotations from Church leaders and their attitude toward constitutional government and the American way of life. However, each reference used has been checked with the original source for accuracy. For excellent information on this subject see Jerreld L. Newquist (compiler), *Prophets, Principles and National Survival* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1964).

APPENDIX A

DENUNCIATIONS OF SOCIALISM BY COUNSELORS TO THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

As early as 1908 Charles W. Penrose, later counselor to President Heber J. Grant, gave this intelligent description of Socialism and its adherents:

One of the moving forces in the civilized nations of the world which is stirring up what is called 'the lower classes,' creating no small commotion in the churches, and attracting the attention of legislators, statesmen, and even the nobility and royalty, goes by the name of *socialism*. It is rather difficult to define. It has different phases, tenets, modes of operation and schemes to accomplish the end it claims to have in view. Some of its advocates profess to be Christians and claim that its doctrines are Christian in character. Most of them, however, repudiate or ignore religion altogether, and make no pretense of bringing Deity into their ideas or lives or objects.

With a few of its adherents it means anarchism—the destruction of all governments. With most of them it means the absorption of the individual into a body of the State, which is to regulate, control, and own him and all he can accumulate. The common purpose which each of its various factions has in view is the abolition of poverty and the establishment of equality in the possession and use of this world's goods and products. It consists chiefly in theories which are not attempted to be put into practice, and which, in many respects, appear to be impracticable when human nature is fairly taken into consideration

Putting aside the different wild, conflicting and unpractical notions of its street orators and clerical or secular champions, *it aims at complete paternalism in government*. No individual is to own anything. Everything is to belong to the state. All properties, utilities, industries and persons are to be owned by the entire body politic, represented by the government. Each individual will thus have equal claims with others for all that is needed for temporal support and intellectual education, so that nobody will lack the necessities of life or means for general advancement. Nor will anyone own the land or other species of property, and thus there will be no rich and no poor, but all, in a certain sense, will be equal.

There are different views among Socialists as to the manner in which this radical change is to be effected, but when pressed to a declaration of their intents, the declaration is made that when a sufficient number of adherents to Socialism is obtained, holding the voting power, a government is to be set up by this majority which will *exercise compulsory force* to dispossess property-owners and take in all public and private institutions, properties, wealth, and everything that has been produced by the activities and accumulations of the ages or of modern times. *In other words, there is to be a general confiscation, or, as viewed by many minds, a wholesale robbery in the name of law, and the establishment of a tyranny greater*

than any form of oppression ever known to the world. The end in view is to justify the means employed. The leveling of all inequalities is to condone the sweeping destruction of human rights and liberties.⁵⁸

In the depths of the Great Depression, in 1932, President Anthony W. Ivins, First Counselor to President Heber J. Grant, had this to say:

I fear this, that under existing conditions (in 1932) we are gradually drifting toward a paternal government, a government which will so entrench itself that the people will become powerless to disrupt it, in which the lives and liberty of the people at large may be jeopardized.⁵⁹

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. one of two persons in our history to be a counselor to three Presidents (Grant, Smith, and McKay), expressed himself in 1939 as follows:

Reduced to its lowest terms, the great struggle which now rocks the whole earth more and more takes on the character of a struggle of the individual versus the State. Does the individual exist for the benefit of the State, or does the State exist for the benefit of the individual?⁶⁰

* * *

All over the world, this new State comes into all these fields in the disguise of a protesting love and friendship for the people, whose property it means to confiscate, whose liberties it means to steal, and whose religion it means to destroy. . . .

* * *

The whole trend today is towards the centralizing of power. A wholly alien political philosophy, brought to us by aliens, has taken root amongst us. This philosophy knows nothing of the rights of man and discards with derision the fundamentals embodied in our Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. While the followers of this philosophy group themselves into different isms, yet in the last analysis they all come to the same end—the establishment of a socialistic, paternalistic state and the submergence of the individual and his rights. This concept is as old as man. All it is doing now is to dress itself up in a new suit. This concept is today imposing despotism in its worst forms upon the millions in the old world.⁶¹

In 1945 President Clark predicted the expansion of socialism after the war in the following words:

58 Charles W. Penrose, 1908 (*The Millennial Star*), 70:696-7.

59 Anthony W. Ivins (Conference Report), 10/32:111-2.

60 J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Nov. 16, 1938. Found in *Prophets, Principles, and National Survival*, Newquist, p. 318.

61 J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Dec. 15, 1939. "Some Thoughts and Expectations of a Policyholder," New York City.

We shall come into postwar America in substantial part . . . regimented for a socialized State and Government which defies the State and makes of men its slaves. . . .

Let us look at our condition: Already we have begun to move down that trail which we follow like dumb sheep; public nurseries have been set up to tend the children while the mothers work . . . public kitchens have been established in the schools where the children may be fed by the State instead of going home . . . proposed laws would prevent youth from helping earn the family livelihood and governmental recreation has been provided to take the place of work; CCC Camps have been created to take youths thus State fed, clothed and housed, from their home localities, mingling all kinds and classes together and gathering them into large camps . . . public gratuities have been scattered broadcast for doing something and for doing nothing. . . . Do you not see how far we are along the revolutionary road? No small part of our population is already debauched.⁶²

In 1939, at the end of the depression of the 1930's, Stephen L. Richards, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, who was later First Counselor to President McKay, had this to say:

I am sure that it is regrettable and a point of real hazard to individual liberty that in many countries, even to some extent in our own beloved America, there is a clearly discernible tendency to relieve people of responsibilities which they have long been accustomed to bear and to extend *paternalistic solicitude* and care to vast portions of the population. However well intentioned such policies, I am confident they are destined to result in weakening of moral fiber, increased dependencies, and, more importantly and worse than all, eventually, a destruction of the fundamental concepts and philosophies that have been responsible for the progress of humanity in the world.⁶³

President Henry D. Moyle, a member of the council of the Twelve and later a counselor to President McKay, gave his views in 1949 as follows:

When we cease to be a God-fearing people we fall easy prey to the false philosophy of evil-designing men and nations. This was true in the days of Israel, as a study of the Holy Bible reveals. It is true today as history now unfolds itself. For this reason we are discarding, even in this great nation of freedom-loving people, a God-given constitution of freedom, inspired for free men that they might worship according to the dictates of their own conscience, for the doctrines of collectivism produced to enslave mankind and rob them of all freedom and make them puppets of dictators rather than children of our Heavenly Father, living in freedom, at liberty to exercise their God-given free agency.⁶⁴

62 J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Jan. 24, 1945. "Some Elements of Post-War American Life," Salt Lake City.

63 Stephen L. Richards, Conference Report 4/39:42.

64 Henry D. Moyle, Church News, June 19, 1949.