

# Divisions of the House

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THE WORLD CONFERENCE is the highest legislative authority of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The First Presidency of the Church is responsible for administering the laws and policies of the church as approved by its World Conferences (Rules of order 10–12, WCR 861). These two simple statements define a dynamic relationship which is far from simple, either to fully understand or to describe. This paper is primarily an attempt to describe and analyze some of the World Conference contributions to the relationship between 1964 and 1984.

These gatherings were for many years called General Conferences, but in 1960, apparently struggling to describe its identity, the conference voted to change the term to World Conference (WCR 1021). (Calling itself a “World” church may have seemed presumptuous when it was officially present in only ten nations, but the term may have helped expand the outlook of the members. In 1986, it has a presence in some forty nations.)

The RLDS Church has, of course, been struggling with its identity ever since it first started trying to publicly dissociate itself from the Utah Church. This struggle has continued in recent years as manifest by the consideration (and defeat) of no less than four resolutions concerning its name since 1964. In a number of more significant resolutions, it has also struggled with the deeper question of what the church itself should be.

During the last two decades, World Conferences have been held in Independence, Missouri, every two years for one week, a time span which traditionally includes April 6. A number of functions are served at these conferences:

1. “Housekeeping.” Presenting reports, calls to priesthood offices and posts in the organization, elections to boards and committees, passing a budget, and appropriations.

Wallace B. Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, addresses a bi-annual world conference from the Auditorium pulpit in Independence, Missouri.

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2. **Worship and Fellowship.** Preaching and ordination services, concerts and programs, various official and unofficial group activities, and informal visiting before, after, and throughout the conference.

3. **Ceremonial.** Honoring retirees, making awards, receiving greetings from government leaders, representatives from other churches, etc., and accepting gifts, usually symbolic of various cultures and church-related organizations (for example, headdresses and kimonos).

4. **Conferring and Legislating.** Some conferring occurs on issues, but this is limited. Legislation can set policies and define programs, and can also make statements on doctrine, take positions on social issues, etc. A special category of legislation is accepting revelatory documents from the President of the Church.

Each conference is a "happening." Usually, fifteen to twenty thousand members pour into the city, packing the restaurants, and filling hotels, motels, and homes. (Many non-RLDS also open their homes for conference participants.) Many people arrive several days ahead of conferences, particularly those from distant places who also tour historic sites and participate in some of the many pre-conference activities.

Pre-conference activities include meetings of a number of professional and interest groups (e.g., the John Whitmer Historical Association, medical-dental, architects, teachers, lawyers, etc.), some educational forums, quorum meetings, and *many* informal gatherings. These occur particularly among people who may have come to know one another in various parts of the world through ministerial assignments or other traveling and now live far apart. The World Conference in Independence is, in many respects, a gigantic reunion.

The RLDS Auditorium is a continuous beehive of activity before and during conferences. The many small meeting rooms are tightly scheduled, with overflow into the nearby Stone Church and other locations throughout the city. The "buzz" of visiting and discussions (and the swift passing of rumors — often including one that "the Quorum of Twelve is split right down the middle" on some issue) never stops in the hallways of the auditorium, even during the business sessions. The bustling activities continue into the evenings, with preaching services, programs, concerts, and small group meetings, followed by late-night gatherings in homes all over town.

Before a World Conference session is called to order, the main conference chamber, which can seat 5,800, usually looks much like the floor of a Republican or a Democratic nominating convention, with people crowding the aisles and hustling about in every direction. But when a President Smith calls a session to order, the pandemonium stops. The 2,800 delegates, and approximately the same number of spectators at a business session, become quiet and attentive. The business begins.

RLDS World Conferences are delegate conferences. In all of the various jurisdictions (stakes and districts) of the church, conferences meet two to four months before the World Conference and elect delegates. Many jurisdictions a long distance from Independence will often simply select those who have the

means and the time to attend the World Conference. Others have occasionally had somewhat heated elections centering around the perceived "liberal" or "conservative" tendencies of candidates.

Until 1984 delegates were elected one per 100 members in a jurisdiction. *Ex officio* delegates to the conferences included all World Church appointee ministers, department heads at headquarters, presiding officers of districts, branches, and congregations, and all high priests (WCB 1962, 12, 13, 108–11). (Virtually all *ex officii* were ordained men, and ordination in the RLDS church is both less automatic and less likely to progress through an orderly succession of offices than LDS priesthood). *Ex officii* could also be elected as delegates. When an *ex officio* also took an elected position, this effectively reduced the total representation within the jurisdiction, but for some reason, many *ex officii* did decide to run and were elected. This system obviously reduced the number of women and youth who would otherwise have been elected, but the numbers cannot be accurately determined. Starting in 1984, *ex officio* status was discontinued except for thirty of the church's presiding officers and the ratio of elected delegates changed to one per 68.4 members of a jurisdiction. (*Ex officii* can no longer run for elected delegate positions.) The ratio will vary in the future to keep the overall size of the conference at about 2,800 members (WCB 1982, 272).

Now that there are very few *ex officii*, it might seem that RLDS World Conferences are becoming less "priestly" oriented and more democratic. This remains to be seen. There is a very real chance that priesthood members will run for and win more of the elective delegate positions, thus making up an even *larger* proportion of conference assemblies in the future. In addition, I can't begin to predict what effect the ordination of women will have on this factor.

Some jurisdictions at their conferences also pass resolutions for proposed legislation for the World Conference. Delegates, however, are not bound by that legislation or instructed by their jurisdictional conferences as to how they must vote. They are supposed to listen to the discussion at the World Conference, and then vote according to their best judgment for the benefit of the whole church. Most delegates seem to do this very conscientiously.

Proposed World Conference legislation is considered in several ways prior to actual presentation in the plenary sessions. The First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve, Quorums of Seventies, Orders of Bishops and of Patriarchs, and the Quorum of High Priests have meetings for that purpose before the plenary sessions where they also may develop some of their own proposals. Their recommendations and proposed legislation are presented in the plenary sessions by their leaders, a process which has changed very little over the last twenty years.

For delegates who are not members of these groups, however, the process of submitting legislation has evolved significantly. In the 1960s, while such quorums, councils, and orders were meeting, a number of classes were simultaneously held for women, youth, church school teachers, girls leaders, and others (Conference Schedules in WCB 1964, 1966, 1968). Under various

titles, "pre-legislative sessions" were available to them as well. However, they were very short compared to the time scheduled for quorum sessions and were only to supply information. Delegates would receive more details about reports, some background information on selected upcoming legislation, and the opportunity to ask a church leader some questions. They could not, however, debate any of the issues, make any recommendations to the assembly, or develop any alternative legislation as could the quorums, councils, or orders.

In the 1970s, the delegates' pre-legislative sessions gradually became a little more significant. They supplanted classes in the schedule, more time was devoted to discussion, and two subgroups were formed in 1974 — mass meetings of the elders and of the Aaronic Priesthood (WCB 1974, 251, 260). These two groups have been able to discuss reports and resolutions, to make recommendations to the World Conference on them, and to introduce legislation.

The 1982 World Conference adopted a resolution establishing "a delegate caucus composed of all elected delegates who are not members of quorums, councils, orders, or committees of the World Conference." The delegate caucus could initiate legislation but could not perform any other functions, such as reviewing other legislation, discussing reports, etc. (WCB 1982, 343). A minimum of 200 delegates is required to convene the caucus, and agenda items must have at least fifty delegates' signatures. In 1984, the first time such a caucus was formed, it proposed one resolution for consideration at a plenary session (WCB 1984, 341, 346). (The resolution concerned funds for delegate travel and was referred to the First Presidency and Bishopric.) Delegate caucuses are seen as an interim solution to the problem of "equal access for priesthood and laity to initiate legislation during the course of World Conference" (WCB 1984, 232).

A major factor in increasing the significance of delegate pre-legislative sessions has also been the respect given them by the First Presidency. Gradually, over the last twenty years, the First Presidency shared more and more information with the delegate sessions before plenary sessions. The best example is the presentation of revelatory documents. For many years, such documents were presented in supposed confidence to the quorums, orders, and councils, and were not available to the rest of the delegates until they had been approved by those bodies. Members of the quorums, however, would find themselves unable to keep the information to themselves and the news invariably spread through the conference. In the 1970s, President W. Wallace Smith opened the process significantly by having the documents read aloud at the delegate sessions at the same time they were being presented to the quorums for consideration. Written copies, however, were not available to the delegates until formal presentation in the plenary sessions. At the World Conference of 1982, however, the document presented (a revelation on leadership changes and encouragement for witnessing), was published verbatim in newspapers before it had been presented in writing to delegates. At the conference of 1984, President Wallace B. Smith presented the document at the same time to all quorums, orders, councils, and groups of delegates at the World Conference. (The

quorums, orders, and councils were then able to discuss and vote their approval. The delegate sessions still received the document for their information only.)

Beginning with the 1984 World Conference, hearing committees of delegates were introduced "to thoroughly and systematically consider the value of all legislation presented to the World Conference" (WCB 1982, 272). The First Presidency appoints committees of three members of the conference to preside over each hearing, along with a sponsor of the legislation and a representative from the world church to serve as resource persons for the discussions. The hearings are limited to discussion and to dealing with questions about the implications of legislation which has been submitted; they are not to get involved in parliamentary procedure or to actually debate, make amendments, etc. A hearing typically last two hours, after which the committee members make a written summary and recommendations to the plenary session. Even if the proposed legislation receives only brief consideration in the later legislative session, those who are concerned about a topic have had two hours in which to explore it in depth together.

The quorum and delegate sessions and hearing committees are pretty much "all business." The plenary sessions of World Conferences, on the other hand, begin with a great deal of pomp and ceremony. The members of the church's presiding quorums are all seated in groups on the rostrum, and the president of the Quorum of Twelve makes a motion that the First Presidency preside over the World Conference. The opening ceremonies continue with a colorful procession of the flags of all of the nations in which the church is represented, carried to their position on the rostrum by persons from those nations, usually in their national costumes. Greetings are then usually received from such government leaders as the mayor of Independence, a senator, a governor, etc., before the business actually begins.

Much of the time of conferences has generally been taken up by the ceremonial and housekeeping functions. These are, of course, essential for the organization to maintain itself, and they are not necessarily mundane or automatic (though they may often seem to be so). Formal acceptance of the credentials of all of the delegates gives a legal basis for the actions of the conference. The public sustaining of general officers is important to the church. It is also important for the church to recognize publicly those who have given yeoman service for many years. The ceremonial functions have legal significance and are full of meaning for many people.

Items usually regarded as routine "housekeeping," such as setting the date for convening the next World Conference, have not always been simple. In 1974, the conference changed the First Presidency's proposed date for the 1976 conference (WCB 1974, 260). The original date coincided with local elections. Participation in World Conference activities has often drawn many RLDS residents of Independence away from local political activities — voting, working the polls, etc. — and has likely influenced the outcome of some of the Independence city elections, which have often been very close for a city of

approximately 125,000. For example, a 1982 city council seat was decided by four votes, and the 1978 mayoral race was decided by twelve. The quip was made at the conference that year that the Quorum of Twelve had elected the mayor. It may have been true.

No call to priesthood office or major quorum functioning has been turned down at a World Conference in the last twenty years. But in ten of the eleven World Conferences since 1964, amendments have been proposed to the church's budget, and in three conferences, budget amendments have been made (WCB 1968, 279; 1976, 247; 1984, 316). The budget reflects the priorities given to the funded programs of ministry, and it often receives rather extensive consideration by the delegates. Some conference members try to make budget amendments as a way of expressing disapproval of some administration policy or program. For example, in 1970 when some church school materials were controversial, amendments were submitted to delete the budget of the Christian Education Department. The amendments failed (WCB 1970, 298). Some 1978 delegates who disagreed with leadership directions in women's participation proposed deleting the budget for the Women's Ministries Commission (WCB 1978, 258). They also failed. The vast majority of the conference members have given their support to the First Presidency in the few "showdown" votes on these matters and others like them.

Budget amendments have never been very substantial, for several reasons. Probably the most important is that budget proposals have been carefully prepared in detail by a "pre-appropriations committee," and most conference delegates realize they can't redo the committee's job. Frequently, passing the budget has made it difficult to pass other items of legislation later in the conference. If a legislative proposal requires some funding, for example, the fact that the budget has already been passed makes it very unlikely to be adopted. The conference has only on extremely rare occasions voted to reconsider an issue and has *never* voted to reconsider a budget. Furthermore, discussion of the budget has usually been lengthy and involved. Once the vote has been taken, the vast majority of the assembly quite understandably lacks any desire to reconsider it.

The few budget amendments which *have* succeeded have sought funding for additional programs not included in the budget proposals prepared by the administration. For example, to a total budget of about \$9 million passed in 1976, amendments added \$30,000 for an audio-visual lending library and \$500 for the nominal expenses of a church student center at Iowa State University (WCB 1976, 247).

Sometimes, members have tried to legislate policies or programs for other institutions which are church-related but legally separate, with their own boards of trustees (WCB 1968, 148-51; 1970, 214). These institutions include Grace-land College, Park College, Herald Publishing House, and the Independence Sanitarium and Hospital. In these cases, the conference cannot legally pass or enforce resolutions *requiring* actions of other institutions since the decision-making power of an institution must rest with its own board of trustees. Con-

ferences could *advise* these institutions of their wishes and requests, but the institutions are responsible to their own boards, not to the World Conference.

In 1976, four separate resolutions were introduced to require the church's publishing house to publish an inexpensive version of the Book of Mormon, one even naming the price of one dollar (WCB 1976, 189, 190). In 1968, an earlier resolution would have set the price at fifty cents (WCB 1968, 146). In each case, the Herald House board would have had to solve the cash flow problem of publishing a book far below cost. Our Utah cousins could even have — innocently, of course — bankrupted this RLDS institution by buying all of their copies of the Book of Mormon from the Herald House. These resolutions were out of order and were not even voted on.

On some occasions, resolutions have tried to legislate how some headquarters departments directed by the First Presidency function. The First Presidency is responsible for administering the day-to-day affairs of the church. While the World Conference can establish overall policies and program priorities for the First Presidency, it cannot effectively handle the details of how those policies and programs should be implemented. The line between proper policy statements and meddling is not always clear-cut. But a good example of over-ambition involves legislation about church school materials. Controversy arose out of differences over the nature of the church and the nature of education in the church school. Some saw the church school as a vehicle for indoctrination about the one true church; others saw it as a guided presentation and evaluation of various ideas about the nature of the church and what it means to be a Christian.

The controversy heightened when some preliminary "study papers" to stimulate background consideration of topics for the educational materials became public. These study papers were not sufficiently faith-promoting for much of the membership, who brought their dissatisfaction to World Conferences. From 1970 to 1978, eighteen resolutions were presented, almost all of them critical of the philosophy behind the church school materials and calling for materials to more faithfully teach "the principles of the gospel as contained in the Bible, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants" (WCB 1970, 295). Their sponsors did not realize that questions of content and approach cannot be handled adequately by a legislative body. One attempt to define in detail the philosophies to be followed in church school curricula came out this way:

*Resolved*, That the basic principles for kingdom living be contained in the curriculum that we might give to all of God's children a way of life which will give to them the confident assurance that God not only loves all of his creation but has identified himself in this dispensation of time by the inception of the Restoration movement and is continuing to speak to that original movement known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; and be it further . . .

*Resolved*, That the Religious Education Department not be engaged in promoting modern theological expressions found in other institutions (except in harmony with General Conference resolutions) but rather in bringing forth in a creative endeavor, out of the genius of the Restoration, materials that will assist all of God's children to find the abundant life which Christ came to give. . . ." (WCB 1970, 306-7)

Still other very lengthy resolutions have attempted to define specifically the precise materials which would be sufficiently faith-promoting. Portions of two different 1974 resolutions read:

*Resolved*, That one quarterly be prepared for each age group that deals with Restoration distinctives as traditionally understood (i.e., Book of Mormon, priesthood organization in the church, divine revelation, the restoration of Christ's church, the apostasy, etc.). . . .

*Resolved*, That immediate steps be taken to strengthen these Restoration teachings through addenda or supplemental materials to the new curriculum; and be it further

*Resolved*, That these addenda, supplements, revisions, or replacements place particular emphasis on the Restoration distinctives as traditionally understood (e.g., divine revelation and an open canon of scripture; the church established by Christ, fallen into apostasy, and restored; priesthood divinely called and organized; the Book of Mormon; the Doctrine and Covenants; etc.). . . . (WCB 1974, 190)

The World Conference has recognized the impossibility of enforcing such statements and has consistently voted them down. However, similar resolutions continue to be introduced at almost every conference. This controversy was obviously the stimulus for revelatory counsel to the church membership in 1974: "Seek to be reconciled one with another. Let not your differences over procedures and program materials separate you and thus vitiate my influence for good in the world which is torn asunder by the devastating powers of evil" (RLDS D&C 151:8b).

The conference delegates often display different understandings of a World Conference's proper duties. Some try to handle too much administrative detail in legislation; others would "rubber stamp" everything church leaders bring to the conference; some find the balance which lets them effectively work together in legislative activity with the leaders and other delegates for the benefit of the church. Differences sometimes arise out of differing views of the First Presidency's function. Some, who feel it represents the ultimate in priesthood authority and has the right to decide nearly everything, are ready to give it unquestioning support in conferences. Others see the First Presidency more as *facilitators* of decision-making by the body and see their votes in a much different way. The differences are probably fairly accurately described as the differences between "assent" and "consent." *Assent* describes a rather passive acquiescence or agreement with decisions, and *consent* describes a more active involvement with collaboration in making important decisions. Statements by members often show the tension between these concepts.

Though conferences as a whole have supported First Presidency proposals, that support is not automatic, and delegates have demonstrated that they do not want their support taken for granted. One example was a proposed affiliation with Park College at the 1980 World Conference (WCB, 234, 278). Park College had been affiliated for over 100 years with another denomination but had developed serious financial difficulties, temporarily handled by management assistance and loans from Graceland College and from the church. In seeking long-term stability, Park College requested permanent affiliation with

the RLDS Church. Many delegates felt that they did not have sufficient information to make an informed decision and voted to defer the proposed affiliation until specific requests for more information were fulfilled. The desired information was provided at the 1982 conference, and the affiliation was then approved (WCB 1982, 283, 348).

Another way to examine these internal relationships is statistically. Table 1 shows the proportion of resolutions originating with the First Presidency which have been passed or rejected by conferences. Tables 2, 3, and 4 summarize how the World Conferences have dealt with resolutions from other sources as well. In making these tabulations, I included "non-house-keeping" proposals, such as policy determinations, initiating programs, position statements, etc., but excluded such routine "housekeeping" items as sustaining general officers, approving priesthood calls, accepting reports, etc. Also, I considered amended resolutions in three different ways:

1. Amendments which did not change the original intent of the resolution but simply refined the wording.
2. Amendments which modified the original intent significantly, but retained at least some of the original.
3. Amendments which totally changed the original intent, sometimes even reversing it completely.

I chose not to tabulate the very minor amendments involving word choices which made no significant change in meaning. If the original meaning of a

TABLE 1  
RESOLUTIONS FROM THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

Year	Total Submitted	Approved Unchanged	Amended	Lost
1964	5	5	0	0
1966	1	1	0	0
1968	6	2	2	2
1970	10	5	5	0
1972	12	10	1	1
1974	11	5	5	1
1976	7	5	2	0
1978	4	3	0	1
1980	5	2	3	0
1982	7	4	3	0
1984	6	3	1	2
TOTALS	74	45	22	7
%	100%	60.8%	30%	9%

TABLE 2  
RESOLUTIONS FROM GENERAL QUORUMS AND COMMITTEES

Year	Total Submitted	Approved Unchanged	Amended	Referred	Lost
1964	2	2	0	0	0
1966	2	2	0	0	0
1968	12	6	5	1	0
1970	4	2	1	0	1
1972	5	2	2	0	1
1974	1	0	1	0	0
1976	5	2	2	0	1
1978	5	5	0	0	0
1980	4	2	2	0	0
1982	9	5	2	2	0
1984	1	0	0	1	0
TOTALS	50	28	15	4	3
%	100%	56%	30%	8%	6%

TABLE 3  
RESOLUTIONS FROM JURISDICTIONS

Year	Total Submitted	Approved Unchanged	Amended	Referred	Lost
1964	7	1	0	1	5
1966	7	0	5	0	2
1968	17	1	4	4	8
1970	25	4	1	12	8
1972	10	1	0	9	0
1974	20	3	8	5	4
1976	23	2	0	7	14
1978	15	0	1	9	5
1980	15	1	0	4	10
1982	8	4	1	3	0
1984	12	2	2	4	4
TOTALS	159	19	22	58	60
%	100%	11.9%	13.8%	36.4%	37.5%

TABLE 4  
RESOLUTIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS

Year	Number Signatures Required	Total Submitted	Approved Unchanged	Amended	Referred	Lost
1964	1	4	1	1	1	1
1966	1	6	2	1	1	2
1968	1	11	0	2	3	6
1970	1	17	2	1	1	13
1972	1	10	1	0	5	4
1974	25	9	2	1	5	1
1976	25	11	0	0	3	8
1978	25	7	2	0	5	0
1980	25	28	3	0	3	22
1982	100	3	1	0	0	2
1984	Caucus	1	0	0	1	0
TOTALS		106	14	6	28	59
%		100%	13.2%	5.7%	25.5%	55.7%

resolution was at least partially retained, I categorized it as "amended," but if it was completely changed, I tabulated the original motion as "defeated," and counted the substituted resolution as a new one that was passed. Though there could be slight disagreement over a few items I have put in each category, they would make only very minor changes in the overall numbers.

Since 1964, of a total of seventy-four resolutions submitted by the First Presidency, forty-five (60.8 percent) have been accepted unchanged. Another twenty-two (30 percent) have been passed with amendments, usually (but not always) minor. Except for 1964 and 1966, when all of the First Presidency's resolutions were passed, each conference has either completely turned down or modified at least one of their resolutions. A total of seven (9 percent) of the First Presidency's resolutions have lost completely since 1968. I tabulated as "lost" resolutions which have been voted down, some which were tabled and not brought off the table before adjournment, and those which the First Presidency withdrew after initial presentation when the conference expressed some problem with the proposals.

Resolutions are also submitted on behalf of the World Church by other top quorums and committees — primarily the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, the Presiding Bishopric (bishops are primarily financial officers in the RLDS Church), Quorums of Seventies, and by the "Conference Organization and Procedures Committee." (This standing committee appointed by the First

Presidency meets at regular intervals to evaluate World Conference structures and procedures and to make recommendations to conferences about how to organize and to do business in the most effective manner.)

Of a total of fifty resolutions from top quorums and committees in twenty years, twenty-eight (56 percent) have been approved unchanged and fifteen (30 percent) passed with amendments. Four have been referred for further study, and three have lost completely. As with resolutions from the First Presidency, 1964 and 1966 saw 100 percent acceptance, a record repeated in 1978. Otherwise, every conference has seen delegates turn down or amend some of the resolutions submitted by major quorums and committees of the church.

Resolutions may also originate in pre-conference jurisdiction meetings. (See Table 3.) In fact, more resolutions come from the church's approximately 120 districts or seventeen stakes than from any other source. An occasional resolution comes from a national regional conference, a large metropolitan branch, or a smaller branch, which can submit resolutions if it is not a part of one of the other sub-units of the church.

Resolutions from the jurisdictions have a much smaller chance of passage than those of the First Presidency or other top quorums and committees. Of a total of 159 resolutions submitted to World Conferences from conferences of jurisdictions, only nineteen (11.9 percent) have been passed unchanged and another twenty-two (13.8 percent) have been amended.

One of the fascinating aspects of the legislative process has been amendments. An example of an amendment which completely reversed the intent of the original resolution came at the 1970 World Conference where a number of resolutions condemned a then-new church school curriculum and called for its replacement with other materials. A motion was made to refer all of these resolutions to the First Presidency for their information and study. This move to refer was then followed by a motion to amend by "striking everything after the word 'moved'" and reiterating the condemnation and demand for new materials. Another amendment was finally adopted, however, which removed all condemnatory statements and *affirmed* the use of the "new curriculum," with a statement recognizing that revision and updating of materials is always necessary (WCB 1974, 255).

The largest proportion of jurisdictional resolutions (a total of sixty, or 37.5 percent) has lost completely or has been referred (a total of fifty-eight, or 36.4 percent), usually to a presiding quorum. Referring often has the same effect as voting down a resolution.

Referring or voting down a resolution does not necessarily mean its introduction has been futile. Simply the fact that the concerns of a jurisdiction or group of members have been presented has often resulted in useful dialogue among conference delegates and church leaders and has paved the way for future actions and recommendations by the administrators and committees to which the resolutions have been referred. Occasionally, the desired action is even directly implemented administratively. It is sometimes difficult to tie

specific referred resolutions with specific later actions, but here are my candidates for such a list:

- In 1968, a resolution entitled "The Church and Campus Ministry" was referred to the First Presidency's Commission on Education without any requirement for action. However, funding for campus ministries was included in the subsequent budgets presented to World Conferences (WCB 1968, 155).

- In 1976, two resolutions expressing concern about needs for "Older Youth Ministries" were referred to the First Presidency, who immediately assigned them to a task force studying the question. This task force recommended such ministries which were implemented administratively by the First Presidency's staff without further conference action (WCB 1976, 187, 188).

- A resolution in 1970 concerned the church's "Budget Planning Policy." It was not workable in the form presented, but most of its provisions were incorporated into policies which were developed administratively and used in the preparation of subsequent budgets beginning with the 1972 conference (WCB 1970, 155).

- A 1970 resolution called for a "Study of Conference Organization and Procedures." The concerns in this resolution appear to have clearly served as some of the impetus for some of the functions assigned later to the standing committee of this name (WCB 1970, 137, 140).

- A 1974 resolution concerned "Moral Alternatives to Participation in War." This resolution was referred, but the concerns later surfaced in public statements of the First Presidency and in recommendations to later conferences (WCB 1974, 236).

- In 1974, a request for an "Employee Pay Study" was referred, but subsequently administrative policies responded affirmatively to the concerns for equity included in the request (WCB 1974, 229).

Through 1972, any delegate could present a resolution to the World Conference. (See Table 4.) From 1974 through 1980, due to a resolution modifying the legislative processes, individuals could get their resolutions to the conference floor with only twenty-five or more signatures. In 1982, it was changed to 100 signatures (WCB 1972, 252; 1980, 274). The delegate caucus system, instituted in 1984, essentially ended individual resolutions. Now the only way to initiate legislation on the World Conference floor is with a prior majority vote in a subordinate body — a jurisdictional conference, or a meeting of a quorum, standing committee, or delegate caucus (WCB 1982, 273).

A total of 106 resolutions were submitted by individuals from 1964 to 1982. Of these, fourteen (13.2 percent) passed unchanged and six (5.7 percent) in an amended form. Fifty-five percent failed completely, and 25 percent were referred for further study.

In 1980, one individual presented fifteen resolutions, each with twenty-five signatures. The resolutions covered a far-ranging set of concerns, from encouraging the formation of additional professional and vocational associations to instituting a "suggestion box" for the church headquarters; from re-

affirming support of the Word of Wisdom to asking for guidelines on conducting “more Christian” funerals; and from instituting a bureau of research and service to instructing church officers to buy economy cars (to “replace the gas-guzzling models now prevalent on the present inventory of church-owned vehicles”). His purpose in presenting all of these resolutions was never made clear, but he is a very intelligent and jocular city-planner who would, I am sure, gladly accept my descriptions of him as a political liberal, anti-violence peace-wager, and proud and open supporter of any good cause, regardless of its popularity or lack thereof. Some felt he was purposely making a joke of the whole system. I think he was serious about most of his resolutions, and that any “joke” had the serious purpose of showing the church some of its problem areas. (In this regard, I think he failed.)

In the minds of most, this gentleman abused the proper legislative processes of World Conference. Some of the 1982 discussion leading to termination of the signature method of introducing legislation referred to this abuse. As I recall, however, the conference successfully handled all fifteen resolutions in about thirty seconds each, a record which I feel is sufficient protection against abuse by any individual. Others (apparently the majority at the conference) felt it was sufficient reason for terminating this method of bringing resolutions to World Conferences. I believe he did a serious disservice to those who have responsibly brought resolutions to World Conferences by the signature route, but I also believe the conference overreacted.

In my opinion, the conference also curtailed the rights of significant and deliberate minorities to have a hearing in the World Conference. When 100 or more delegates agree that an issue merits a hearing at a World Conference, I think they’re probably right. But now, a minority, while it can offer amendments to legislation from other sources, cannot be heard if the subject is not *initiated* by a majority vote in one of the subordinate legislative bodies.

Few would argue with the principle of majority rule in a legislative body such as a World Conference, but the support of the minority for decisions of the majority cannot properly be expected unless it has had an opportunity to express those concerns before the decisions are made. The rights of minorities must always be weighed against the rights and needs of the majority. But the hallmark of real democracy is not only that the majority rules — but that it also respects and protects the rights of the minorities in its midst.

To get your legislation passed “unscathed” by RLDS World Conferences, it obviously helps to be a member of the First Presidency or of a presiding quorum, but even then it is not a sure thing — only a little better than a fifty-fifty proposition. But the chances go way down for resolutions originating in jurisdictions or from individual delegates during conferences. (See Table 5.)

It is interesting to compare how the World Conference handles legislation originating in jurisdiction conferences with that originating with individual delegates. The evolution away from individual resolutions has reflected the belief that legislation reaching the World Conference floor should have previously gone through a process of “refinement” by a quorum, committee, or

TABLE 5  
RESOLUTIONS PASSED UNCHANGED\*

Year	First Presidency	Other World Church Bodies	Jurisdictions	Individuals
1964	5/5	2/2	1/7	1/4
1966	1/1	2/2	0/7	2/6
1968	2/6	6/12	1/17	0/11
1970	5/10	2/4	4/25	2/17
1972	10/12	2/5	1/10	1/10
1974	5/11	0/1	3/20	2/9
1976	5/7	2/5	2/23	0/11
1978	3/4	5/5	0/15	2/7
1980	2/5	2/4	1/15	3/28
1982	4/7	5/9	4/8	1/3
1984	3/6	0/1	2/12	....
TOTALS	45/74	28/50	19/159	14/106
%	60.8%	56.0%	11.9%	13.2%

\* Number passed/Number submitted.

jurisdiction conference. The statement of the rationale begins with the affirmation that "consideration of resolutions by a prior legislative body is a valuable step in the deliberative process" (WCB 1982, 273, 343-44). The facts would suggest that this concept has not worked in actual practice.

If consideration of resolutions by prior legislative bodies were truly valuable, the World Conference should have passed a higher proportion of resolutions which originated in those bodies than by the signature route. However, during the last twenty years, World Conference delegates have found approximately the same proportion of resolutions acceptable "as is" from both — 11.9 percent for jurisdictions and 13.2 percent from individuals. If the fifteen resolutions submitted by the single person in 1980 were excluded from the tally (all were either voted down or were referred), the percentage of signature resolutions passed "as is" would even rise to 15.4 percent.

Some resolutions are "out of order" due to minor technicalities, sometimes because they would be completely impossible to implement, and sometimes due to serious conflict with existing church law. (See Table 6.) If the presider believes a resolution is out of order, he so declares it to the conference with an explanation of reasons. It will then not be considered unless the conference votes to support an appeal of the chair's decision.

TABLE 6  
RESOLUTIONS DECLARED OUT OF ORDER

Year	From Jurisdictions	From Individuals
1964	1/7	1/4
1966	1/7	0/6
1968	1/17	0/11
1970	2/25	1/17
1972	0/10	0/10
1974	3/20	1/9
1976	4/23	2/11
1978	2/15	0/7
1980	3/15	2/28
1982	0/8	1/3
1984	1/12	....
TOTALS	18/159	8/106
%	11.3%	7.5%

\* Number out of order/Number submitted.

Some of the specific bases on which resolutions may be out of order include:

- Resolutions which could not be legally implemented under the laws of the land under which the church is organized. The conference is not a forum with the power to legally deprive people of life, liberty, or property.
- Resolutions which conflict with existing church laws and doctrine as defined in the Inspired Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. The First Presidency is the chief interpreter of the law for the church and is responsible for informing the conference of such a conflict.
- Resolutions which propose amendments to the Rules of Order (the basic "by-laws" of the church) without having been published in the *Saints' Herald* the required sixty days prior to a World Conference to be considered at that conference.
- Resolutions which infringe on the proper duties and prerogatives of administrative or judicial bodies. The World Conference can legislate overall policies and procedures but cannot actually take over their functioning. For example, the conference could never convene itself as a church court nor supervise the details of functioning of church departments and programs of ministry.
- Resolutions which call for actions that cannot reasonably be accomplished. Such a resolution in 1974 would have made a general recall "of all copies now in stock or in the local branches" of the currently-used church

school materials and would have required "deletion from all material of references to books or articles which use language or suggest thoughts which would be found objectionable in a Zionite home" (WCB 1974, 189-90).

It is no surprise that no resolution from the First Presidency or from a presiding quorum has ever been declared out of order. However, of the 159 resolutions originating in jurisdictions, a total of eighteen (11.3 percent) have been ruled out of order. If "consideration of resolutions by a prior legislative body is a valuable step in the deliberative process," then a higher proportion of resolutions from jurisdictions logically would be in order and acceptable for passage than those submitted by individuals. However, as compared with the 11.3 percent of jurisdiction-originated resolutions ruled out of order, only eight (7.5 percent) of the 106 resolutions originating by the signature route have been ruled out of order.

The reason may be that the legislation from stake and district conferences has usually been prepared and presented by an individual or small group of individuals. The jurisdiction conference usually accepts or rejects it with little or no change. These resolutions are often very provincial — relevant only to that jurisdiction or to a few like it. Refining legislation at any conference is difficult since parliamentary procedure offers limited options through amendments and procedural motions. This situation inhibits real conferring and "talking through" to the best legislation possible. In contrast, resolutions presented to the World Conference by means of the signature route have often been developed and refined *during* the World Conference after much consideration among delegates from many areas. The result more often represents a melding of the concerns and opinions of a cross-section of the church than is the case with jurisdictions' resolutions.

If there is a serious intent to have resolutions of a higher quality (which are both legally "in order" and of "world" concern) brought to the World Conferences, attention needs to be given to the legislative process of the jurisdictions. Furthermore, the record would indicate that the lower regard for resolutions submitted by the signature route is not justified.

Each World Conference has seemed to take on an individual "character," usually related to the issues which capture the interest of a large number of the delegates. Some of these issues have woven a thread of concern through two or more conferences, sometimes involving or culminating in the presentation of a revelatory document from the President of the Church. These revelations come, not in a vacuum, but in response to questions that the people of the church have been dealing with. Some of them are: church school study materials (a burning issue during the 1970s), matters of faith and doctrine, peace and war, ecumenism and cooperation with other churches, the nature of priesthood and of women's participation in the church, and the organization and procedures of the World Conference itself.

Many resolutions have been introduced (but few passed) attempting to be definitive about doctrine and faith. They are usually impossible to measure or enforce, cannot be binding on individual conscience, and need further in-

terpretation themselves. Attempts to make such statements legislatively have been rather uniformly useless, resulting in much heat and little light. Those few which *have* passed often end up saying very little and have little ultimate effect. As important as beliefs are, requiring individuals to hold certain beliefs simply cannot be legislated effectively. (In fact, the moral precepts and spiritual characteristics which are *most* essential for Christian living cannot be legislated into being at all.) Examples of “impossible” resolutions are:

- A resolution in 1976 entitled “The Basis of the Church” included a statement that “no officer of the church shall issue any directive, teach any doctrine, or perform any act which is contrary to the Three Standard Books” (WCB 1976, 244).

- Also in 1976, a “Statement to Government Leaders,” contained a summary of Book of Mormon warnings felt to be directed at those leaders (WCB 1976, 243).

- A 1980 resolution entitled “Church Identification,” would have required church officials to “insure that all military installations and educational institutions recognize this church as separate from all other churches” (WCB 1980, 237).

- Another 1980 resolution entitled “Basic Principles,” reaffirmed a long list of beliefs which the writers felt should be standard for the church (WCB 1980, 237). It was quite a comprehensive catechism of church beliefs, many of which would themselves have required extensive interpretation.

- Yet another 1980 resolution, “Recommitment to Restoration Beliefs,” included such statements as “the church believes the Apostasy of the Dark Ages and the Restoration movement of 1830 to be facts of history, and that the church looks forward to the literal establishment of Zion and the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on earth” (WCB 1980, 276).

I am not attempting to express any judgment about the *holding* of these beliefs — only the uselessness of legislating statements about them. Fortunately, the World Conferences have passed none of them, though a great deal of their time has been occupied in discussing them and others like them.

Issues of peace, war, and the use of force have prompted fourteen resolutions presented in all but two of the World Conferences since 1964. Agreement has been difficult to achieve, viewpoints ranging from total pacifism to support for very strong conventional and even nuclear military forces. The serious discussion has sometimes possibly been more useful than the final legislative product, as in 1970 when the initial statement of the standing committee, “We oppose war,” was amended to make it almost meaningless by adding, “except as an unavoidable recourse” (WCB 1970, 317). In 1974, the conference voted instruction to the church administration “that adequate information and counseling with respect to various legal alternatives to military service be made available by the World Church (WCB 1974, 192, 268).

At the 1982 World Conference, two resolutions concerning “Peace” and “Nuclear Arms Reduction” were sponsored by the First Presidency and accepted by the conference, with one amendment (WCB 1982, 288–89, 365–

66). While the statements were not identified specifically as revelation, they counseled that God's commandments challenge us "as stewards of God's creation to be responsible for world conditions" and outlined several specific ways for church members to be involved individually and collectively in promoting peace in the world.

Many RLDS members, and to a significant extent the institutional church, are involved in ecumenical activities. "Ecumenism" in this sense means working with other denominations and community organizations in cooperative endeavors, *not* merging organizational identities or giving up distinctiveness. In fact, many participants in ecumenical activities find them useful settings for expressing distinctiveness in the ministries the church is able to give to the world. Examples are participation in community ministerial alliances, state councils of churches, Bread for the World, and many others. Since 1979, the RLDS Church has been a "supporting denomination" of Church Women United — in addition to extensive local and state involvement, as of this writing, four RLDS women serve on the national "common council" and three on the executive council of Church Women United. Some members' belief in the "only true church" would preclude such associations, and some discussions and votes in conferences have exhibited a tension between their views and those who support ecumenical involvement.

A total of eleven resolutions from 1968 to 1984 have directly addressed the question of joining together in cooperative endeavors with other religious and community organizations. In 1970, a proposal to join with IFCO (the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Organization) lost, 855 to 825, when a "division of the house" (counted vote) was called for (WCB 1970, 309, 329).

In 1974, the revelation gave instruction: "You who are my disciples must be found continuing in the forefront of those organizations and movements which are recognizing the worth of persons and are committed to bringing the ministry of my Son to bear on their lives" (RLDS D&C 151:9). Also in 1974, the conference turned down a resolution which would have required that, in the church's Temple School, "all teaching and instructional personnel will be members of the Saints Church" (WCB 1974, 262).

In 1978, the First Presidency proposed, and the World Conference approved, the church's participation in the United Nations' observance of "The International Year of the Child" (WCB 1978, 208). The same conference also approved a First Presidency resolution to join with other agencies to develop programs addressing the problem of world hunger (WCB 1978, 209).

In 1976, a resolution stating that the church should have nothing to do with the World Council of Churches or the National Council of Churches was voted down in another division of the house, 1099 to 846 (WCB 1976, 241). In 1980, two similar resolutions failed to even reach the conference floor when objections to consideration were sustained. (An "objection to consideration" can be moved immediately after a resolution is presented if a member feels the resolution is insulting, contentious, libelous, repetitious, etc., and that the body should not even consider it. The conference then votes immediately whether

to consider the resolution further.) A resolution which had been written as a substitute was instead overwhelmingly adopted which resolved that "the World Conference hereby endorses the participation of the World Church in interdenominational Christian ministries where such participation does not require the World Church to . . . alter or abandon any of the traditional beliefs and practices of the church" (WCB 1980, 274, 304).

In 1984, a resolution which had been presented by the Minnesota district was passed (amended to specifically include child advocacy) to involve the World Church in cooperation with organizations which are working to secure basic human rights for all persons throughout the world (WCB 1984, 243, 346).

Women's roles in the church have been a matter of intensifying concern at World Conferences. Madelon Brunson's excellent paper at the 1984 Mormon History Association meeting, later published in *DIALOGUE*, summarizes the evolution of thinking and legislation regarding women's roles in the church (1984). Here is a brief summary of recent legislation concerning women in the RLDS Church:

- A 1970 resolution to increase the representation of women on church commissions and committees. An amendment asking the First Presidency for "a clarifying statement on the ordination of women to priesthood" was literally shouted down, and both resolutions were tabled (WCB 1970, 309, 329).

- A 1972 resolution encouraging selection of women in the church for all "positions not scripturally requiring priesthood" (WCB 1972, 170, 276). An attempt to refer this resolution to the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve was defeated when the conference was reminded that referral would mean an all-male body would be handling the resolution on "Opportunities for Women." The resolution passed.

- Four 1976 resolutions, voted down, using various rationales to prohibit the ordination of women. A First Presidency resolution was passed which stated that there was "no ultimate theological reason why women, if it were thought wise to do so, could not hold the priesthood," but requesting "that consideration of the ordination of women be deferred until it appears in the judgement of the First Presidency that the church, by common consent, is ready to accept such ministry" (WCB 1976, 181, 264).

- A 1980 resolution calling for nonordination of women, prevented from reaching the floor due to overwhelming support of an objection to consideration (WCB 1980, 274, 307). Two resolutions were presented from jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand which would have established "home rule" in the decision to ordain women. (Apparently they felt they were ready.) They were ruled out of order on the basis that priesthood authority is world-wide, not a matter for "local option" (WCB 1980, 236, 307).

- A 1982 resolution stating that "there is no scriptural basis or precedent for ordaining women to the priesthood." It was opposed by another stating that "there is no scriptural basis for limiting God from calling whomever God desires to call to priesthood responsibility." Both were referred to the First

Presidency at its request, and a task force provided to study “whether or not the church, by common consent, is ready to accept the ministry of women as ordained persons” (WCB 1982, 268, 331, 355).

- The 1984 report of the task force, finding that, under existing conditions, about one-third of the membership were in favor of ordaining women, about one-half were opposed, and the remainder were neutral on the question (WCB 1984, 246–47). However, when the prophet stated, as the voice of God’s Spirit, “Do not wonder that some women of the church are being called to priesthood responsibilities,” the question was answered for the vast majority of the delegates, who overwhelmingly voted approval of the document as the mind and will of God, and its inclusion as Section 156 of the RLDS Doctrine and Covenants (WCB 1984, 308–9).

Throughout 1985, after much preparation, the first women were approved in jurisdictional conferences for ordination as elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. In various parts of the world, eighty-five women were ordained 17 November 1985. As of February 1986, the First Presidency reported that 413 women had been called to the priesthood (WCB 1986, 51). The numbers continue to increase, with positive responses in most areas. A few jurisdictions have had problems accepting the ministry of ordained women. Two districts generated three resolutions for the 1986 World Conference which would have rescinded the approval of Section 156 and also the ordinations of the women performed thus far. President Smith ruled the resolutions out of order on a number of bases. The decision of the chair was appealed, and the conferences then voted to accept his decision by a margin of about 90 percent. The RLDS church isn’t about to turn the clock back on the issue of ordaining women.

Except in 1970, the President of the church has presented revelatory documents to each conference from 1964 to 1984 to be considered for acceptance as the mind and will of God. There is no legally required format or manner of presentation, although certain patterns have become essentially a tradition. Most documents have contained callings of general church officers, followed by counsel to the church on various subjects, including admonition, encouragement, amplification of doctrine, etc. They have always been presented first to the quorums (and more recently to the delegate sessions as well), and brought to the conference floor only after approval in the quorums. Unlike other legislative matters, a revelatory document cannot be amended but must be accepted or rejected as a whole, even if it contains completely differing topics.

On every occasion the World Conference has approved these documents with provision for printing them in the Doctrine and Covenants, but approval has not been automatic. Revelatory statements are given serious consideration, sometimes with much discussion before approval. Approval has always been by a very large majority but is rarely, if ever, unanimous. On one occasion in 1968, some of the delegates were sufficiently confused by a document referring to the office of bishop as a “necessary appendage” to the high priesthood

(D&C 149) that the President presented a further revelatory statement (D&C 149A) clarifying the relationship between the bishopric and the presidency. Thus in the eleven World Conferences from 1964 to 1984, eleven revelatory documents have been considered and accepted.

The World Conference continually goes through reevaluations and attempts to refine its procedures with the Conference Organization and Procedures Committee making recommendations to virtually every conference and with many resolutions coming from jurisdictions and individuals as well. During the last twenty years, resolutions have been accepted (sometimes with amendments) in several areas, including representation and leadership, methods and sources for initiating legislation, methods of handling legislation, and parliamentary procedure.

Before 1970, the RLDS Church conducted its business meetings by a modified form of Robert's *Rules of Order*. The procedure in many of the quorums and delegate sessions was often highly informal, compared with plenary sessions of the World Conference. Due to procedural problems in at least one quorum, a 1970 motion was passed to use Robert's *Rules of Order* at all levels within the church (WCB 1970, 305). In 1980, belatedly recognizing that not all of the world knew about and lived by Robert's *Rules of Order*, this policy was modified to apply only to those parts of the world familiar with it.

Except for very rare instances and for brief periods, RLDS World Conferences are presided over by a member of the First Presidency (Rules of Order 18, 9). While their authority to preside is never disputed, their manner of presiding occasionally is. Decisions of the chair have been appealed by delegates thirty-seven times (in all but two conferences in the last twenty years). Only twice, however, has the conference voted to *overrule* the decision of the chair (WCB 1970, 290, 292; 1974, 249). In 1970, the conference voted to support the decision of the chair when it had been appealed, but President W. Wallace Smith courageously informed the assembly later in the conference that he had discovered his earlier ruling had been in error.

Until 1980, a delegate who wanted to speak or to make a motion would (presumably when it was in order) stand and address the chairman of the assembly. On issues of great interest, dozens of members would often jump up shouting, "Mr. President." In an assembly of two to three thousand members, this would often present difficulties in fairness and lacked the decorum thought desirable by many. Some delegates in particular were faster on their feet and louder with their voices than others, particularly than delegates who did not speak English. (RLDS World Conferences have simultaneous translations into several languages — plus signing for the deaf — going on during the meetings, delegates tuning in transistor radios with earphones to hear the proceedings in their own tongues. This allows non-English-speaking delegates to participate actively, but there is some delay while the translation occurs.) For some non-English-speaking delegates, this sort of democratic functioning has been highly foreign — and has even seemed disrespectful of the leadership and of the

assembly. Even when they have tried to participate, they have often lacked the split-second timing required to obtain the floor.

In 1982, a number of microphone stations were established throughout the conference chamber. Delegates go to these stations and give an attendant their registration numbers and statements of that which they want to do parliamentarily. The attendant in turn, phones this information to a central computer operator who lists them on the screen for the presider. The presider, from this listing indicating who wants to do what, tries to call on delegates in a fair fashion.

The computer system has certainly made the last two World Conferences quieter and more decorous, but has resulted in less spontaneity and conferring in response to earlier speakers. Essentially all participation has had to be prepared well in advance, possibly enhancing the quality of speeches and motions in some ways but diminishing the *evolution* of discussion, in which delegates build on one another's participation by getting to the floor to respond to previous speeches. It has also largely prevented delegates from presenting compromise resolutions which they might have prepared after hearing the discussion in progress. By the time one's name is reached on the list, opportunity to speak will have passed due to some other delegate's amendment or procedural motion which was entered on the list at the earliest possible moment when the issue was called to the floor.

Because only a portion of the process is computerized, the attendants at the stations must communicate with the central computer operator by voice, one at a time, station by station, presenting quite a slowdown in the whole process. When a number of delegates "descend" on all of the stations at the same time, there is no way to know in what order delegates started trying to register their desire to participate. Furthermore, when the issue is of substantial interest at all, the computer screen is not large enough to display the entire list of names and intentions.

The presider often has to decide when enough speeches have been heard on the existing motion, and, sometimes somewhat arbitrarily, when to move on the acceptance of an amendment, a procedural motion, or to calling for the vote. In my opinion, split-second timing has become even *more* critical — and more unfair — than the system of standing and addressing the chair. Under the "shouting" system, participants would have many opportunities to try to get the floor, but with the computer system, they usually have only one chance. They must anticipate when the presider will call up an issue in time to be at a station and get their name in at the beginning of the listing, or the vote will be ordered before they're ever recognized. This makes it even more difficult for the non-English-speaking delegates to have a chance to participate.

In short, while computerization offers many possibilities for refining the legislative processes of World Conferences, it is far from being a perfect solution.

The largest single category of legislative proposals at RLDS World conferences of the last twenty years has been its continual attempts to improve its

organization and procedures for doing business — about forty resolutions in the last twenty years, with 1982 seeing the greatest number of changes in any one year.

I cannot predict just what further changes will occur, but with great confidence I can make *one* prophecy about the nature of RLDS conferring in the future: IT WILL CHANGE.

*A Personal Note:* I observed my first RLDS World Conference in 1954 as a student at Graceland College. While a student at Kansas University, I attended portions of the 1956 conference. The U.S. Army stationed me at Fort Riley, Kansas, which allowed me to attend part of the 1962 World Conference. I moved to Independence to practice medicine in 1966. Since 1968 I have participated in every World Conference either as an elected or (being a high priest) as an *ex officio* delegate.

Many persons have attended many more conferences than I have and could round out the history and analysis in this paper with experiences which far outnumber mine.

At virtually every conference, I have participated “behind the scenes” as well — in discussing individuals’ resolutions with them before their final presentation and in “strategizing” for passing legislation I have thought would be in the interest of the church — particularly in the high priest’s quorum sessions, where issues often receive better consideration than in the public plenary sessions (we can be much less formal there) and where recommendations are often made to the World Conference for the best action to follow.

Even deeper “background” influence on conferences has come through church school classes which my wife and I have taught on a number of occasions. For several years, in the months before World Conferences, we have had classes on what a conference is and how to participate responsibly, as well as giving preliminary consideration to pre-submitted legislation. Following a conference, the classes have considered the actions of the conference and the implications of those actions for our own jurisdiction. This class has led to our being asked to write a book which is “in the mill” on conferring in the RLDS church.

I have felt keenly on several issues that have come before conferences and have taken action when I felt moved to do so, on legislative items which are discussed in the body of this essay. My objection to consideration was sustained when a 1970 motion was made to delete the budget for the Christian Education Department. In 1972, when an attempt was made to refer a resolution on “Opportunities for Women” to the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve, I reminded the conference that these were all-male bodies. I believe this is why the referral was voted down and the legislation passed. Also in 1972 I introduced a resolution in the high priests’ quorum meeting asking for a study on induced abortion. The study was done and presented to the World Conference in 1974. It remains the Church’s position on abortion in 1986. In 1974, when seven resolutions were presented condemning the church’s educational materials and one which commended them, I presented the alternative resolution which

was accepted by the conference. I also presented the resolution calling for a study of equity in employee pay. The resolution was referred, but many of its concerns were implemented administratively. When the Conference Organization and Procedures Committee presented a 1978 resolution to limit the introduction of legislation to top quorums and committees and to jurisdictions, I presented a resolution allowing legislation to also be introduced over the signatures of twenty-five delegates. In 1980 I presented a compromise resolution concerning Park College when it appeared certain that affiliation with the church was going to be voted down by the conference. My resolution provided for a continuing temporary affiliation, but deferred the final decision until the 1982 conference when additional information could be presented. A permanent affiliation was then approved. To offer the alternative choice to the 1982 resolution stating, "There is no scriptural basis or precedent for ordaining women to the priesthood," I wrote the substitute resolution calling for the removal of all legislative impediments to ordaining women, since "there is no scriptural basis for limiting God from calling whomever God desires to call to priesthood responsibility." Though both resolutions were referred to the First Presidency, the dialogue on them may have had something to do with the prophet's perception of the readiness of the church to receive light on this issue.

In addition, I have spoken on the World Conference floor to many issues. I admit to being what most would term a theological "liberal," though I believe my positions are derived from belief in the *fundamentals* taught by Jesus Christ. The greatest compliment I have ever received was during the Park College issue. An observer at the conference, when the impasse became clear, told people around him, "Just watch. Dick Troeh will come up with a resolution to solve the problem — because he's a peacemaker."

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- WCB. *World Conference Bulletin*. Independence, Mo. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, bi-annual. It is a collection of printed materials in a looseleaf binder including a schedule of conference meetings and activities, general orientation information, printed reports of all of the church's presiding quorums and departments, the proposed budget, and all proposed legislation. While the conference is in session, a bulletin including the minutes of the previous day's meeting, the reports of the hearing committees, and further announcements is added daily. Pagination is consecutive.