

Brown was reported to have told the press that the First Presidency's letter reflected only opinion and not "divine revelation to the Church hierarchy."¹⁴ He also advised the press that the Latter-day Saints in Congress could vote on the bill as they saw fit without jeopardizing their Church membership. Many Mormons, however, interpreted the First Presidency's letter as God's word rather than human opinion. If a paragraph containing President Brown's statement had been included in the original letter, much confusion and personal dilemma could have been avoided.

3. When the General Authorities decide to make an authoritative statement on a public issue it would be preferable if this statement received the widest possible distribution. If these statements are dispatched to legislators it is hoped that they would be directed to the entire body, or the relevant committees, not just L.D.S. members.

Adherence to these proposals will enable the Church to conform to well established patterns of Church-State relations plus help secure the positions of L.D.S. legislators. From the evidence reviewed here it is clear that the 14(b) letter had little effect on Mormon legislators' votes. Those opposing repeal continued to vote against the issue, and those favoring repeal did not shift. But the letter initiated an intense personal crisis for some legislators; should they vote in accord with their political ideologies or conform to the ideology presented in the letter? All voted with conviction, and for two it was very costly. Both Kenneth W. Dyal and David S. King were defeated in 1966, after having faced considerable opposition from members of the Church; their votes on 14(b) were doubtless a factor.

¹⁴On this subject see G. Homer Durham's excellent little essay, "Credibility and Gullibility," *The Improvement Era*, LXIX, No. 11 (November 1966), 944-946, 954.

THE L.D.S. CHURCH AS A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL REFERENCE GROUP IN UTAH: "RIGHT TO WORK"

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The 14(b) case of 1965 provided an opportunity to consider the question, "Is the Church perceived as a significant political reference group by its members when a clearly defined political position is assumed by the First Presidency?" This question is examined in the narrow context of the specific issue of the right-to-work laws as it was viewed by members of the Church living in six Utah Wasatch Front counties some months after the issuance of the First Presidency's letter to Mormon Congressmen. Any conclusions drawn must be constrained by these limitations.

In the Spring of 1966 we drew a proportionally stratified, multistage, random probability sample of one-thousand registered voters in the above counties, which contain almost eighty-four (84%) percent of Utah's total population. The purpose of our technique of sample selection was to generate a microcosm representative of a much larger population in order that some meaningful generalizations might be made about the larger group.

The total sample group was filtered to eliminate those who could not correctly describe the right-to-work law, and from those remaining we identified Mormons and non-Mormons. It is this dichotomous group which forms the basis of our analysis. By eliminating those who could not correctly describe right-to-work legislation we obtained a measure of Mormon and non-Mormon knowledge of the law. In response to the questions, "Can you tell me what the right-to-work laws are?" and "To what church do you belong?" it was found that fifty-seven (57%) percent of the Mormons interviewed and fifty-five (55%) percent of the non-Mormons could, in a general sense, correctly identify right-to-work laws. There is no significant difference between the two groups based on their knowledge of right-to-work laws. That is, the differences observed could quite probably have occurred by pure chance.¹

To determine whether or not Utah Mormons held different attitudes on right-to-work legislation than Utah non-Mormons, and thus gain some insight *ex post facto* into the possible impact of the First Presidency's statement, we asked the following question of those who knew what right-to-work laws are: "Generally speaking, are you for or against right-to-work laws?"

While Mormons were *not* more knowledgeable about right-to-work laws than non-Mormons, they were considerably more strongly in favor of them. Eighty-three (83%) percent of the Mormons and only sixty-nine (68.8%) of the non-Mormons favored right-to-work laws. This difference could have occurred by pure chance *less than* one time out of a thousand.² Hence, we conclude initially that there is considerable reason to believe that political stance on the right-to-work issue is related to membership in the Mormon Church. This conclusion must, however, be examined critically in the light of three qualifications.

First, of those Mormons who were knowledgeable about the right-to-work issue, we must determine how many were also aware of the Church's position, and if this awareness is related to support of right-to-work laws. We cannot expect Mormons to have been swayed by the First Presidency's letter if they did not perceive the Church's stand. If those who are unaware of the stand still favor right-to-work laws in about the same proportion as those who recognize its stand, then we must look elsewhere for an explanation of the observed differences between Mormons and non-Mormons on this question.

¹Specifically, the calculated chi-square value (X^2) is .34. The hypothesis of independence is accepted, or, in other words, we do not have sufficient reason to say that a person's knowledge of right-to-work laws is dependent on his religion. The probability that they are not associated is greater than fifty times out of a hundred. These statistics will be annotated in the footnotes henceforth as $X^2 = .34$ and $P < .50$, where P is the probability of association.

² $X^2 = 21.84$, $P < .001$

The second qualification is related to but not synonymous with the first. We would expect that if Mormons in fact take the Church as a significant political reference group, then those who identify themselves most closely with the Church in terms of their activity would also, as a group, conform most closely with the Church's right-to-work position.

The third qualification lies in the fact that those interviewed were not only Mormons, but also had political, union, and non-union affiliations. They were of differing income and educational groups. Could not the difference in attitude of Mormons and non-Mormons on the right-to-work issue be "explained" without reference to the Church's influence if sufficient difference in membership in these various groups were found and if it could be shown that Mormons more consistently as a group had associations which tended to be pro-right-to-work? Each of these qualifications will be considered in turn.

L.D.S. PERCEPTION OF CHURCH'S RIGHT-TO-WORK POSITION

Those Mormons who could identify right-to-work laws were divided into two groupings — those who knew the Church's position and those who did not. As is clear from Table I, the recognition of the Church's stand made considerable difference in support of right-to-work legislation.

TABLE I.

MORMON KNOWLEDGE OF CHURCH'S RIGHT-TO-WORK STAND AND ATTITUDE TOWARD RIGHT TO WORK

	Know Church Position		Don't Know Church Position	
	N	%	N	%
For RTW	268	89	64	67
Against RTW	34	11	32	23
TOTALS	302	100	96	100

This difference could have been observed by chance less than one time in a thousand.³

It is of considerable interest to note in regard to the above table that while Mormons who did not know the Church's position support right-to-work laws (sixty-seven percent favorable), this was slightly less than the support of non-Mormons (sixty-nine percent favorable).

It is clear that those who were knowledgeable about both the right-to-work issue and the Church's position more closely conformed to a favorable grouping than those members of the Church who were not aware of it.

CHURCH ACTIVITY AND SUPPORT OF RIGHT-TO-WORK

Does activity in the Church, as self-identified, tend to influence support of right-to-work laws? Mormons who were both knowledgeable about the issue

³X² = 24.3, P < .001

and the Church's position were asked, "With respect to your membership in the L.D.S. Church, (generally speaking) do you consider yourself: very active, moderately active, somewhat active, somewhat inactive or inactive?" These responses were then cross-tabulated against each subclass's support of the right-to-work law, and the following results obtained.

TABLE II.
CHURCH ACTIVITY AND KNOWLEDGE TOWARD RIGHT TO WORK

	For RTW		Against RTW	
	N	%	N	%
Very Active	162	64	10	31
Moderately Active	47	18	10	31
Somewhat Active	15	6	3	9
Somewhat Inactive	12	5	5	16
Inactive	17	7	4	13
TOTALS	253	100	32	100

Seventeen of the interviewees did not desire to respond to this question.

As is clear from Table II, those who favored right-to-work laws were, by their own judgment, much more active as a group than those who opposed them. The difference observed between these two groups could have occurred by chance about five times out of a thousand.⁴

The preceding analysis affords strong evidence that Utah members of the Church generally, but especially those who can recognize a Church "position" and those who are active, view the Church as a significant political reference group as reflected in their favorable support of the right-to-work laws.

NON-CHURCH GROUPS WHICH ALSO FAVOR RIGHT-TO-WORK

However, this conclusion must be tempered by the determination also made in the study that Mormons in Utah tend to be as a group less Democratic, less unionized, and slightly better educated than non-Mormons. All of these factors tend to be associated with a pro-right-to-work stance.⁵

An interesting example of selective misperception emerged from the analysis of the interrelation of these factors which also gives some additional but tenuous support to the conclusion above — that the Church is a political reference group of significance for Mormons. Of the 418 interviewees who were L.D.S. and said they "knew" of the Church's position, twenty-nine fell in the category less likely than any other to support right to work. They belonged to unions, had less than a high school education and affiliated politically with the

⁴X² = 14.80, P = .005. This result must be interpreted with care because of the small frequencies in the "against RTW" column.

⁵The authors will publish an in-depth analysis of these factors as they interrelate to Church affiliation and position on right-to-work laws in the near future.

Democratic Party. All listed themselves as "somewhat active in the Church." Fifty-five (55%) per cent of this group said that the Church *opposed* right to work.

TABLE III.

GROUP AFFILIATION/EDUCATIONAL LEVEL
MORMONS VS. NON-MORMONS

PARTY ID	Mormons		Non-Mormons	
	N	%	N	%
Republican	289	39.0	79	32.6
Democrat	238	32.1	111	45.9
Independent	213	28.7	52	21.5
UNION MEMBERSHIP				
Belong to union	148	20.1	58	24.4
Do not belong to union	587	79.9	179	75.6
EDUCATION				
Less than high school	116	15.6	55	23.1
High School	292	39.2	72	30.1
Part College	186	24.9	73	30.5
College graduate	95	12.7	22	9.2
Post graduate	57	7.6	17	7.1

CONCLUSION

While we cannot on the basis of the evidence presented state that Church membership caused strong support of right-to-work legislation and conclude therefrom that the Church must represent a significant political reference group for its members, we can make certain factual assertions, with determined probabilities, about the interaction of the Church's position on right-to-work with attitudes held by its members.

There is little difference between Mormons and non-Mormons judged on their knowledge of right-to-work laws.

Great difference, statistically, is found, however, in the overwhelming support Mormons give right-to-work laws, as compared to non-Mormons.

Those Mormons who are aware of the Church's position are significantly more favorable to right-to-work laws than Mormons unaware of the Church position. Activity, as self-identified, in the Church is also positively related to a favorable right-to-work position.

From these assertions in this particular case of the right-to-work law, when the First Presidency of the Church made its position known, those members who recognized that stand and those who rated themselves more active than the polar groups in these same categories also tended to conform as a group more closely to the Church's position, and, in this sense, the Church appears to be a significant political reference group in Utah.