

THE ESTABLISHMENT CAN BE SAVED

Dear Sirs:

I am responding to your invitation to those who have "something to say."

By way of identification, I am a returned missionary from Chile, a graduate in History from BYU, a former President of the Young Democrats at BYU, and currently in my second year as a Peace Corps Volunteer teaching English in Lesotho.

Whatever happens I would like to take the opportunity to tell you how much one as isolated as I am appreciates receiving DIALOGUE. May the Lord sustain you in a good work.

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I am under 30. I am 25 to be exact. Yet the more I read about what my generation thinks and the more I see how we are analyzed by those who seem to know, the more I feel myself relegated to the ranks of an ever shrinking minority. I have surely never been among the 2% which Time Magazine called 'the wreckers.' Nor am I among the larger group of radical activists. And I am utterly repulsed by the Wallace and Birch type reactionaries though not so much by the more reasonable followers of Buckley and Goldwater.

Considering how our generation is usually divided on the scale of political inclinations, the only space left to me is among that majority of students and youth which is apathetic or at least only superficially interested in matters of political and social consequence. Not so. Not at all.

If I had to submit to our unfortunate custom of classifying individuals, I would use a term I remember from a panel discussion on extremism at BYU. I would call myself a militant moderate. I choose moderation not because I have self-consciously chosen the middle road between two extremes but because I feel that I have been deserted by those on my right and on my left and am therefore left with nowhere to stand but in the center.

May I parenthetically apologize to those who have an aversion to seeing the first person singular in print. I haven't the nerve to use "we," thus implying some non-existent concensus among a group, nor do I feel emotionally detached enough from the subject to use the passive voice.

How can I justify partial rejection and at the same time partial defense of the Establishment? To paraphrase G. K. Chesterton, I almost feel that the real trouble with U.S. society is not that it is unacceptable. The trouble is that it is nearly acceptable, but not quite.

I believe that some areas of American society which disturb me and many of my age group are, among others: impersonal bureaucracy, social injustice and the failure of the welfare state to eliminate it, and the squandering abroad of our national resources on questionable ventures while domestic imperatives are neglected. These topics should come as no surprise to anyone who has picked up a newspaper, and there is abundant material available on how the radical left feels about these things (and some indications of the opinions of the far right). But what of the young moderates?

As a self-styled militant moderate, I propose to make my views known. If what follows is unscholarly, opinionated and weakly substantiated I would point to an attitude with which many of my peers seem to sympathize and with which I am in qualified agreement: The attitude that feelings are often more significant than cold logic. The scholarly objectivity is often equated with callous indifference.

With reference to the first point previously stated, I believe that bureaucracy can be humanized without first demolishing the established order.

The most regimented and tightly hierarchial system I have ever been part of was the mission field. Every hour had to be accounted for and there were forms, files, reports and memos at every turn. Yet, the system often succeeded in transcending the mechanical atmosphere that cannot help but intrude into an organization so dependent on paper and explicit direction from the top. In short, only on occasion did I feel "folded, spindled or mutilated."



But church bureaucracy is not government bureaucracy. The only agency of government with which I am familiar is the Peace Corps. During my nearly two years association with the Peace Corps I have seen countless examples of conscious effort to avoid bureaucratic tangles and impersonal administration. Of course, the nature of a service-oriented agency lends itself to personal relations and the nature of those attracted to such an agency inhibits the development of over-direction and mechanical functioning. And yet I believe that proper motivation from within coupled with pressure from without (which is mounting everywhere), can enable almost any organization to divest itself of those impersonal and overbearing qualities which its members and clients find objectionable. Business leaders are already encouraging their executives to become creatively involved in social problems, partly because

they find it increasingly difficult to find top quality management trainees who are willing to "fill a slot."

It is certainly true that social injustice is disturbingly evident to all who take the trouble to look. It is also quite evident that the welfare state, during the nearly forty years of its supposed existence, has failed to do much about most of it, and in the meantime it has contributed to the general disaffection with bureaucracy. What surprises me is that those who have been longest and loudest in their criticism seem to imply that all other systems tried during the preceding centuries accomplished much more. And those who have more recently turned against government sponsored attempts at solutions seem loathe to submit viable alternatives.

I don't believe that the welfare state, on federal, state, and local levels has had long enough to learn from its many mistakes; nor has it yet had the resources at its disposal to make a valid test of its potential. I still believe that the liberal philosophy and ideals of a person such as Hubert Humphrey, though not always his tactics, are valid and that when these are perfected they may lead us as near to a just society as any temporal philosophy is likely to do.

To those who would say that we only further dehumanize society by making government responsible for the material welfare of the unfortunate rather than the traditional family and friends, church, and charity, I can only suggest that, at its best, government can only take care of material and political welfare. In the great need to render assistance in the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual fields we will always be very much and very individually our brother's keeper.

In speaking of our foreign versus domestic commitments, I do not wish to expound on the morality of the Viet Nam War. Like all reasonable people I want it ended. I would like to see it honorably ended, but I am no better than the politicians, pundits and scholars at defining "honorable" in this case. I do wish to speak, though, about an excess isolationism and introspection.

I have read statements by and had discussions with those of my peers who feel it is wrong not only to spend money on war and destruction abroad, but that it is nearly as bad to spend energies on aid and development in foreign lands while there is still such a great need in the United States itself.

Surely charity (read concern) begins at home, but the same book tells us that only through reaching outward to others can we find ourselves. If we follow the first precept to the point of concerning ourselves with only national problems, we may be unable to stop the contraction of concern as it shrinks toward state, local, group, and finally individual selfishness. Even though something so drastic is unlikely, at least the eye which can close to the suffering of those in far away places is not likely to be the most perceptive on the home scene.

I believe that immersion into another culture in the spirit of friendship and helpfulness, especially in the "Third World," can be a marvelous preparation for the struggles we must wage at home. At the same time it may be

beneficial to the overseas host country. Merely touring a country is not so effective, nor is preaching there. Most missionaries, especially those returning from an underdeveloped country have learned little more profound about their hosts than; "I never really appreciated what we have here in the States until I spent 2½ years in"

Then to sum up. I believe that the Establishment and the liberal philosophy it increasingly espouses can be and ought to be saved, saved because they can be changed. I see no answers in either reaction or anarchy. If affairs are destined to "hang by a thread," I would hope to be part of the thread.

But if my hopes turn out to be unfounded, if society is really too sclerotic to change for the better and the center of the road becomes morally untenable, then I must follow Anatole France and prefer the errors of enthusiasm to the indifference of wisdom.



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The Autumn, 1969 number of *Dialogue* will be presented as a special issue on Mormon Literature. Guest Edited by Robert Rees and Karl Keller, it promises to be an impressive issue. The tentative contents include:

ESSAYS by Dale Morgan (Literature in the History of the Church), Eugene England (The Book of Mormon as Literature), Wayland Hand (Folk Literature in the Church), Joseph Flora (Vardis Fisher as a Mormon), Mary Bradford (Virginia Sorenson's Accomplishment), Wayne Carver (Is a Mormon Literature Possible?) Ed Hart (The Relevance of Literature) and others.

FICTION by Virginia Sorenson, Douglas Thayer, Robert Christmas and Gerold Butler.

POETRY by Ann Madsen, Stanly Andersen, Clinton Larsen and Arthur King.

REVIEWS by Cherry Silver (Out of the Best Books), Leonard Rowley (Recent Mormon Drama), Kenneth Hunsaker (Recent Mormon Fiction) and Claudia Bushman (Children's Literature).

