## Welfare as Warfare

*The Mormons' War on Poverty: A History of LDS Welfare, 1830-1990.* By Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993).

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ALTHOUGH THIS BOOK HAS AN overly dramatic title, it is a magnificent and sensitive history of the efforts by church members and leaders to respond meaningfully to economic need, not only in LDS communities but around the world. Such efforts have hardly added up to an all–out "war," but there has certainly been a sustained campaign and, at times, some "pitched battles."

The brief foreword by Leonard Arrington indicates that this book project originated early in his career as Church Historian. It was one of several studies commissioned by the Twelve on specific LDS institutions. However, before this project could be brought to fruition, Arrington's extensive history-writing enterprise was greatly truncated and moved to BYU as the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute. At that point a number of his younger colleagues (including Bruce Blumell) were obliged to go into other occupational pursuits. Blumell's work on this project accordingly languished in the files for a number of years, but fortunately not until the Millennium. With some funding from the Mormon History Association, and with Arrington's personal sponsorship, Garth Mangum, long a consultant to the LDS Welfare Services Department, was persuaded to revise and expand the manuscript for publication as the present book. Mangum's enormous knowledge of church archival materials is apparent throughout, particularly in his handling of the political and economic contexts of the various countries within which the church has attempted to establish welfare programs. The various keepers of the church archives, however, would not permit him to cite certain key documents, so he has been forced to include some information without documentation.

From comments over the pulpit and in Sunday school classes, it would seem that most Mormons believe "welfare" began in the church during the 1930s, but the first five chapters of this book show an enormous amount of commitment and activity on behalf of the Saints' "temporal salvation" long before the Great Depression years. The book is organized chronologically in ten chapters, preceded by an introduction, and followed by a section of endnotes and an index. The Ohio, Missouri, and Nauvoo periods are covered in the first two chapters. The third chapter is a brief six pages on the exodus and trek to Utah. Chapter four, on Utah before statehood, deals mainly with the building of an

economic and logistical infrastructure, the rehabilitation of the Relief Society, and the efforts of Brigham Young to promote self-sufficiency both at the individual level and for Utah as a separate society. This chapter has little to say about the related topic of the various communitarian experiments during that period, presumably because they are already covered so well in works like Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* and in the more recent Arrington, Fox, and May book *Building the City of God.* Chapter five covers the first three decades of the twentieth century, or "welfare before welfare," as Blumell referred to this period in his derivative 1979 article in the *Journal of Mormon History.*

The crucial importance and formative impact of the Great Depression on the history of LDS welfare justifies the two chapters devoted to that topic alone: chapter six on the early 1930s and chapter seven on what I would call the "classical period" of church welfare from 1936 through about 1960. Chapter eight reveals in detail how the welfare program has evolved since 1960 to its present highly professionalized and more regionalized structure. Chapter nine is a long and extremely valuable chapter on how the welfare program has been applied in a number of other countries, particularly those in the Third World. Finally, chapter ten provides a brief prognosis about the future form and content of LDS welfare in the U.S. and abroad, with some indications of what the church can feasibly do in the world with limited resources.

Certain key themes run through the book: (1) the fundamentally *spiritual* motivation, from the very beginning, for the church's welfare policies and practices (e.g., self-reliance and dignity over material subsistence per se); (2) the remarkable effectiveness of the church in responding to acute crises from the Missouri and Nauvoo expulsions to the near disasters of the first two Utah winters to the depression of the 1930s to the Teton Dam disaster; (3) the evolution of church welfare programs in pragmatic response to the changing economic and political circumstances in the U.S. and in other countries; (4) the internal political struggles within the church over different visions of welfare; and (5) the growing sense of responsibility in the church for contributing to the alleviation of misery worldwide.

Most Mormons now living have only the most superficial, even mythological, understanding of the history of welfare in the church. It is as though Utah simply abandoned its quaint "communistic" experiments of the nineteenth century on entering the United States in the twentieth, and then everything was "normal" until the Great Depression, when divine revelation intervened and installed the modern LDS "welfare program." (How often I have heard church members cite the welfare program as evidence of continued revelation beyond the Doctrine and Covenants!) The actual fact (as chapter five makes clear) is that the first three decades of this century required a great deal of welfare activity by the Presiding Bishop's Office and the Relief Society in order to accommodate the growing numbers of rural migrants, displaced by the serious farm depression of the 1920s, who were streaming to Salt Lake City (and other western cities) in search of work.

This was a time when the "Social Gospel Movement" common in

American Protestantism was finding its way into Utah, where the Relief Society played a key role not only in charitable programs against unemployment and poverty but also in the building and staffing of hospitals, maternity homes, and medical clinics. Trained social work professionals in the Relief Society attracted the admiration of their counterparts in the rest of the country, and the church welfare structure was often used by both the Red Cross and various government agencies to administer social welfare services in Utah. The relationship between the church (including both Relief Society and Presiding Bishop's Office) and public relief agencies (local, state, and federal) grew even more extensive during the 1930s.

The emerging LDS welfare program of the Depression years was so highly touted by both government officials and the mass media that it soon became burdened with expectations that it could not possibly fulfill. As the Depression began, President J. Reuben Clark and others expressed the church policy as "taking care of our own," independent of the government "dole." This policy, however, was never more than a lofty ideal, for neither in Utah nor elsewhere did the church come even close to getting the membership free of government relief. Indeed, throughout the 1930s, Utah was near the top of the nation in the proportion of its citizens receiving various kinds of government assistance. This discrepancy between the policy ideal and the empirical reality created some minor public relations problems for the church, as well–meaning missionaries and other members went about bragging that no Mormons were on government welfare, now that the Lord had revealed the new welfare program in 1936.

This myth, occasionally passed along (without verification) in friendly newspaper and magazine articles, attracted the wrath of Dean Brimhall, a disaffected Mormon who was federal relief administrator for the state of Utah and had chafed under the scorn that presidents Grant and Clark often expressed for the federal government's approach to welfare. Brimhall's personal papers in the Marriott Library at the University of Utah have thus been consulted more than once by authors seeking to debunk the church's welfare efforts. Yet the only fair way to judge those efforts, whether during the Depression or any other time, is to focus on the many thousands of Saints who *have* been meaningfully assisted by church welfare (but would *not* have been without at least the policy *ideal*), rather than focusing on those remaining dependent on government assistance. The comprehensive welfare program of today does not even try to compete with government programs. Yet its multifaceted approach to *acute* need, with food, medical care, cash, employment guidance, and budgetary training, means that the overwhelming majority of recipients stay on church welfare for only three or four months, relieving government agencies of short- and long-term entitlement obligations that could run well into the millions of dollars each year.

It was during the period from the Depression to 1960 that the welfare program developed into the "classical" form known to those who grew up in my generation. Although announced to the Saints in 1936 as an innovative departure from the past, it actually embraced and centralized practices that had been underway for

many years in local areas. The particularly successful local model in the Pioneer Stake had attracted the attention of the First Presidency, and the president of that stake, Harold B. Lee, was called to full-time church service, first as chief executive of the new program and eventually as an apostle. If the new program (coming, as it did, half way through the Depression) could not be considered an instance of prescient divine intervention, it was nevertheless to be understood as the will of the Lord from that point on; for President Grant announced that he had taken it to the Lord for approval in the manner prescribed in D&C 9:8-9. The creation of a new Church Welfare Committee signaled the intention for the program to be come a *permanent* part of the church structure, not just a temporary expedient to get through the Depression. The new committee also had two other consequences (probably unintended): circumventing the executive authority of the Presiding Bishop's Office and the independent operational responsibility of the Relief Society in welfare matters.

As the emergency needs of the Depression era began to subside, the welfare program was gradually transformed. The original preoccupation with immediate help for the unemployed was replaced with new emphases: (1) long-term preparedness, including family food storage; (2) training those difficult to employ; and (3) mobilizing volunteer labor (among those already employed) for staffing the many farms, canneries, storehouses, and other industries now permanent parts of the welfare program. At the same time, "The Welfare Program had become increasingly a means of teaching and reasserting traditional Mormon values . . . a tool for giving order and direction to the economic lives of Latter-day Saints . . . a means of teaching love, brotherly kindness, and charity; it was a program through which the Saints could gain a deeper understanding of their own collective identity—a greater sense of their uniqueness and special abilities as a people" (155).

The longest chapter covers the evolution of the welfare program from 1960 to the present. These recent decades have seen the redefinition of "preparedness" as a six-part program focused on the individual and the family, rather than on the community or on the program itself: literacy and education, career development, financial and resource management, home production and storage, physical health, and emotional or spiritual strength. "Correlation" has brought the program back under the priesthood, meaning the Presiding Bishopric and several apostles who comprise the General Welfare Services Committee. Operationally, however, the program is (like many others in the modern church) in the hands of the civil service bureaucrats in the Welfare Services *Department*. At the regional level, too, the various welfare enterprises are mostly in the hands of paid professionals, with volunteers only rarely called upon to work on farms or in canneries. Through its various regional offices, the welfare program stands ready to offer large-scale assistance only on an acute or emergency basis (as in floods, storms, and earthquakes). On a more routine basis, welfare services are now rendered primarily to those who are usually self-supporting but whose incomes have been temporarily interrupted by unemployment or other setbacks. An

employment preparedness and training (retraining) component is increasingly prominent today. There is no longer any expectation that Latter-day Saints should be independent of government support or services. The church now tries mainly to supplement these.

The penultimate chapter on the international church is worth the price of the book. Just as the welfare program has evolved through many incarnations with the changing circumstances in North America, it faces the necessity of adapting to a variety of economic, political, and cultural predicaments elsewhere, particularly in the Third World. This chapter assesses LDS welfare needs, and the feasibility of dealing adequately with them, in Europe, the Pacific Rim, the Philippines, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, and several African countries. A variety of experimental approaches has been tried over the years in adapting the welfare program to these exotic locations, but it is apparent that more experimentation will be necessary. Like other LDS institutions, welfare will continue to mean different things in different times and places.

## The Dream of Mormon Sovereignty Ends

*Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War.* By Donald R. Moorman, with Gene A. Sessions (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992).

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DONALD R. MOORMAN'S LITERATE account of the Utah War is set within the larger panorama of events in mid-nineteenth century America and relates the process by which the isolated Mormon community in the Great Basin region became part of a United States touched by the spirit of Manifest Destiny.

The volume is the result of eighteen years of research and writing by Moorman, who passed away in 1980 before final revisions were completed on the manuscript. His associate, Gene A. Sessions, along with other colleagues, completed the task and prepared the work for publication. In the preface, Sessions plainly states that the volume is Moorman's work, and that no attempt was made to update the manuscript. Even the title remained the author's, although Sessions contemplated changing it to "The Mormons, Camp Floyd, and the Overland, 1857-61," which would have more accurately reflected the scope of the book. The history of Camp Floyd comprises only part of the story of the Utah War saga. The author utilizes the old fort much like the hub of a wagon wheel, with its many spokes representing the related subject areas that make up the complete history of the Utah War period of the Great Basin.

Moorman convincingly argues that the brief presence of the U.S. army in the Utah territory "changed forever the Mormon dream of sovereignty over the Great Basin" (259) and