

Satan's Foot in the Door: Democrats at Brigham Young University

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If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. . . . If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

—John Stuart Mill¹

BEFORE ANYONE TAKES UMBRAGE AT THE TITLE of this essay, let me explain that it is extrapolated from the following letter that appeared in the Provo *Daily Herald* on 20 October 1992 (B-4):

"BYU Students for Clinton" the sign blared at the Salt Lake airport at Clinton's departure. Excuse me!

Is this the same pro-abortion, pro-gay rights, pro-excessive government, pro-immorality Clinton who has endeared himself to so many people with like values?

Why would a BYU student support such a man for president? Bill Clinton stomps on every value that the LDS church and BYU stand for. . . . If

1. John Stuart Mill, "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion," *Essays on Politics and Society*, ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 229.

abortion, homosexuality, and immorality are on Clinton's agenda, why would a morally upright person want to support him? What also must a teacher or teachers supporting Clinton be teaching students at BYU?

BYU should clean house. There are thousands of "liberal" arts colleges around to take the malcontents at BYU. Before Satan gets both feet in the door at BYU let those on the Lord's side stand up and be counted so that truth can prevail.

Although the letter caused me to wonder about the differences between "liberal" arts colleges and "conservative" arts colleges, I dismissed it as just another mindless ad hominem attack so characteristic of political frays.

Then the day after the 1992 national elections I was intrigued by reports of sobbing despair and gloom-and-doom fatalism on the BYU campus. One student was overheard saying he was signing up for an overseas LDS mission so that he would not have to witness personally the fall of the United States. Others did not understand how God could let the true party lose, except that in these latter days his prophecies of Armageddon must come to pass.²

As I sought Clinton supporters to see how they felt, I was referred to "those liberal Mormon Democrats"—not just Democrats but always "those liberal Mormon Democrats." I've lost track of how many times I was asked if I planned "to talk to both of them."³ One minor official, when told of my intentions, raised one eyebrow, gave me a nervous, angled glance, and visibly acted as if I were unclean or about to become

2. BYU's College Democrats heard so many negative comments during the election that they decided to make light of them. In a column titled "Donkey Humor" published in *The Conservative Edge* (Jan. 1993, 6), the students said:

For the past few months we have noticed that everyone has something to say when we tell them that we're Democrats. Many have told us their theories on how imminent destruction will surely follow when Clinton takes office. We have put together our favorites and listed them here for your enjoyment.

—The nation will be destroyed in a Rush Limbaugh led uprising of people who refuse to be ruled by femi-nazis.

—"The Lord will quicken His work for [Clinton's] sake."

—God will smite America for electing an atheistic adulterer.

—Clinton is the anti-Christ.

—The election of corrupt leaders is one of the signs of the times.

—The voice of the people chose evil over good in the recent election.

—The communist takeover is now complete.

And our favorite:

"My uncle's neighbor picked up a hitchhiker who said that he had to have his year supply ready before January 21. The hitchhiker got out of the car and when my uncle's neighbor looked back, the hitchhiker had disappeared!"

3. I also lost count of how many times I heard the joke about Republicans holding mass meetings in auditoriums while Democrats held theirs in telephone booths or janitors' closets on campus.

so. I was beginning to feel what it must be like to be a Democrat at BYU.

Yes, I found both of them and many, many more. Indeed, they are in sufficient numbers and in positions of such authority that the author of the above-quoted letter would undoubtedly conclude Satan not only has both feet in the door but has long since led BYU carefully down to hell.

More than forty people were interviewed for this essay. I talked to outsiders, students, faculty, administrators, Democrats, independents, and even a few Republicans (as insurance for my soul).

Outsiders expressed surprise that Democrats even exist, much less hold high administrative positions at the school. I explained that Democrat Robert K. Thomas was appointed by staunch conservative Republican Ernest L. Wilkinson, himself a former Democrat, to serve as the first director of the Honors Program in 1959 and as BYU academic vice-president in 1968. Thomas continued in the latter post throughout the 1971-80 presidency of Dallin H. Oaks, a moderate Republican. Most of the academic vice-presidents and many of the associates since then have been Democrats.⁴

To their credit, their political affiliation was barely known. Wilkinson, on the other hand, was known to use his position as president and quasi-LDS general authority⁵ to promote his political ideologies. A 1962 pro-Wilkinson editorial in the *Daily Universe*, in all candor, stated: "Most of us who have been around for a while realize that President Wilkinson is a conservative Republican. . . . We know these things because he has told us many times."⁶

Prior to the 1951-71 Wilkinson reign, politics did not have a high public profile at BYU, with perhaps one exception in 1919 when the entire school came down on the Democratic side in the League of Nations controversy. Some sixty faculty and spouses and most of the student body petitioned Utah Republican senator Reed Smoot to drop his opposition to the league, to no avail. Smoot, feeling his vote had damaged his effective-

4. Todd A. Britsch, current academic vice-president, is the subject of a story that circulates among Democrats. It seems Bob Moody, a Provo attorney, wanted Britsch to run for a local office. He said he had a great slogan—a sure-fire winner: "Vote for Todd, he's a son of a Britsch." Britsch declined. Peter L. Crawley interview, 23 June 1993.

5. During his presidency Wilkinson simultaneously served as administrator/chancellor of the Unified Church School System from 1953 to 1964. Ernest L. Wilkinson and W. Cleon Skousen, *Brigham Young University, A School of Destiny* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 555-56.

History professor Doug Tobler (a Republican) was called to the high council in a BYU stake during Wilkinson's administration, but one student would not sustain him. The stake president met with the student who said his roommate had taped a class where Tobler had been critical of Wilkinson's 1966 student spy ring. The student thought Tobler was "speaking out against one of the brethren." The stake president cleared things up, and Tobler took his seat on the high council. Douglas F. Tobler interview, 14 July 1993.

6. *Summer Universe*, 21 June 1962, 2.

ness as a member of BYU's board of trustees, offered to resign, but university president George H. Brimhall, himself in favor of the league, refused the offer.⁷

Franklin S. Harris, a Republican,⁸ served as BYU president from 1921 to 1945, four years longer than Wilkinson's storied tenure, and is widely recognized as having firmly established the university's place in the world of academe. He was so quiet politically that when he declared his intentions to run for the U.S. Senate in 1938, the *Y News* stated, "Because he has never shown a great activity in political affairs, President Harris' candidacy comes as a surprise to many members of his Brigham Young University family."⁹

Ironically, Harris was accused in 1936 of leftist leanings because of his earlier travels in Russia. His successor, Howard S. McDonald, also of political low profile, was criticized for implementing "socialized medicine" at BYU because of a mandatory \$10-per-student health care fee.¹⁰

Prior to 1891, most Mormons in Utah territory belonged to the People's Party while their "gentile" neighbors belonged to the Liberal Party.¹¹ As a result, Brigham Young Academy was probably more unified politically than any time since.

From 1891, when Mormons were divided equally between the Republican and Democratic parties,¹² until 1951 when Wilkinson became president, politics at BYU for the most part quietly followed trends in the state. Back then BYU was not a big, internationally recognized showplace of the church and therefore was not considered a political pry bar. Nor was it assumed, as unfortunately is now the case, that anything said on campus represented church political views. As Wilkinson's own BYU history states, "There was a tradition among Utah universities against political leaders addressing college student bodies, especially during political campaigns."¹³

7. James B. Allen, "Personal Faith and Public Policy: Some Timely Observations on the League of Nations Controversy in Utah," *Brigham Young University Studies* 14 (Autumn 1973): 77-98.

8. Conversation with Chauncy Harris, son of Franklin S. Harris, 25 June 1993.

9. Wilkinson and Skousen, 302.

10. Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 192.

11. See Jan Shippo, "Utah Comes of Age Politically: A Study of the State's Politics in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35 (Spring 1967): 91-111; Richard D. Poll, "The Political Reconstruction of Utah Territory, 1866-1890," *Pacific Historical Review* 27 (May 1958): 111-26; and J. Keith Melville, *Conflict and Compromise—The Mormons in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Politics* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Printing Service, 1974).

12. See Eugene England, "On Saving the Constitution, Or Why Some Utah Mormons Should Become Democrats," *Sunstone*, May 1988, 22-30.

13. Wilkinson and Skousen, 600.

That was soon to change, and along with the overall trend toward Republicanism in the state,¹⁴ being a Democrat at BYU was, and to some extent still is, a lonely experience.

Although all Democrats I interviewed were willing to talk, a few expressed fear of being quoted. One told me, "There are risks involved. I have to ask myself, 'Should I be interviewed?'" Another, citing the current academic freedom and rank advancement turmoil on campus, said, "On top of whatever else we are, we can't afford to be publicly Democrat." This was not, by the way, one of the principals in the turmoil.

Given this atmosphere, not all sources in this essay are identified. This weakens the paper but also is a sober reminder that the two-party political system is suffering from malaise in certain quarters at BYU.

Democrat Alf Pratte, an associate professor of communications, while working out in a BYU gym the day after Bill Clinton's victory, expressed "hope for the future." "People around me were shocked," Pratte recalls. "'Come on, you're not serious,' they said." A few refused to converse further. Afterward two in the group sidled up to Pratte and admitted they had voted for Clinton but felt they couldn't tell their colleagues. "It was almost like they were closet homosexuals," Pratte laments.¹⁵

Linda Brummett, manager of BYU's general book department, is not afraid to speak out because, as she says, "I never learned to be terribly discreet." She claims there are more Democrats on campus than people realize, but many are "chicken." "They have learned the best way to survive is to never bring it up," she says.¹⁶

In spite of fears, no one I interviewed knew of anyone who had been denied advancement at BYU as a result of being a Democrat. Actually, it was more dangerous for Republicans than Democrats under Wilkinson, as political scientist Ray Hillam, one of the victims of the infamous 1966-67 student spy ring, attests.¹⁷ "My sin wasn't being a Democrat; it was worse. I was considered a traitor because I was a liberal Republican." Most of the victims of the spy episode were Republicans. As political scientist Lou Midgley points out, "Wilkinson wanted Republicans, but he wasn't happy with the ones he got."¹⁸

Hillam was targeted because (1) he served as advisor to BYU's

14. See Ronald J. Hrebener, "Utah: The Most Republican State in the Union," *Social Science Journal* 18 (Oct. 1981): 103-14; and Thomas G. Alexander, "The Emergence of a Republican Majority in Utah, 1970-1992," unpublished paper written for a series of essays on western politics to be published by the University of Oklahoma Press.

15. Alf Pratte interview, 25 June 1993.

16. Linda Brummett interview, 22 June 1993.

17. Ray C. Hillam interview, 25 June 1993. For information on the student spy ring, see Bergera and Priddis, 207-17; and D. Michael Quinn, "Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon Political Conflicts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Summer 1993): 32, 50-55.

18. Louis C. Midgley interview, 1 July 1993.

United Nations Club and supported the admission of Red China into the United Nations, (2) he was "disloyal" because he supported Sherm Lloyd instead of Wilkinson in the 1964 Republican primary bid for the U.S. Senate, and (3) "Wilkinson didn't think I liked him, and I didn't," Hillam says.

The highly respected J. Keith Melville, a Democrat and now professor emeritus of political science, fared better under Wilkinson but not without a scare. Following provisions of the so-called "Second Political Manifesto,"¹⁹ which requires BYU personnel to get clearance before seeking political office, Melville obtained permission from acting BYU president Earl C. Crockett to run for Congress in the 1966 race. Wilkinson was on leave at the time running for the U.S. Senate. After suffering a humiliating loss to Frank Moss, Wilkinson returned to find Melville preparing to run. He called the professor to his office and asked who had granted permission. "I don't know that he liked the image of one of his faculty members running on the Democratic ticket," Melville says. Most Democrats on campus were in the closet, and Melville was one of the first to go public. When Melville explained he indeed had permission, Wilkinson asked how he was going to finance the campaign. Melville replied he would do the best he could and then had the temerity to ask if Wilkinson would like to contribute to his campaign. Wilkinson brought his fist down on his desk and exclaimed he wouldn't contribute one cent to "that Socialist party." In spite of this and a continued high profile in the Democratic party, Melville completed a distinguished career at BYU without handicap. He notes, however, that it seemed easier for Republicans than Democrats to get permission to run for office.²⁰

The closest I came to finding rank advancement interference by Wilkinson, based on possible political leanings, was a story told to me in 1985 by the late Martin B. Hickman, a Democrat who served seventeen years as dean of social sciences. Hickman said a certain "Professor X" was up for promotion, but Wilkinson wouldn't approve the advancement because he didn't like the letters the candidate had written to the *Daily Universe*. Mystified, the professor said he had never written to the *Universe*, "not one letter." The dean so informed Wilkinson.

Time passed. One day a Wilkinson research aide approached the professor in the library saying he had been searching everywhere for the letters. Might the professor have the originals in his files? Obviously Wilkinson was still hot on the trail. After finally realizing he had the wrong man, he approved the advancement of Democrat Thomas G. Alexander, now Lemuel Hardison Redd, Jr., Professor of Western American

19. As contrasted to the church political manifesto of 1896. See B.H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 6:334.

20. J. Keith Melville interview, 24 June 1993.

History. Alexander made it, but I wonder what happened to the author of those letters.²¹

Some time later Wilkinson called history department chair Ted Warner to solicit nominations for a committee assignment. Warner's suggestions included Alexander, to which Wilkinson responded, "No, no, not Tom. He's a socialist." Apparently Wilkinson was upset because Alexander, in a paper delivered in a college colloquium, said Republican senator Reed Smoot had favored protective tariffs and environmental legislation. Wilkinson later called Warner back to explain that he didn't feel Alexander was a socialist but a number of general authorities would think so.²² Alexander did not get the assignment, but, considering how faculty feel about committee work, being viewed as a socialist probably was an advantage.

Wilkinson tried to infuse conservatism into everything, but was not always successful. Larry Wimmer, professor of economics and a Democrat now turned political agnostic, says his department for many years had used a popular Keynesian textbook titled *Economics* by Paul A. Samuelson. About 1968 the faculty felt it was time for a change and chose an alternate work. Unaware of the decision, Wilkinson, an anti-Keynesian, memooed the department saying Samuelson's text should not be used on campus. The faculty met, reversed its decision, and continued to use the old textbook.²³

It may not have been dangerous to be a Democrat, but the atmosphere was so thick with post-war, communist-threat paranoia that anyone left of extreme right-wing Republicanism felt marginalized. Merle Tanner-White, computer science undergraduate coordinator, says she was shocked when she came to BYU near the end of the Wilkinson era and found a total lack of political diversity. "There was one opinion about everything, and if you didn't have it, you weren't part of the system," she recalls. What was worse, she had been viewed as a conservative in New York but in Utah was labeled an ultra-liberal. "It was freaky," she says.²⁴

BYU's political reputation extended far beyond campus. Garn Coombs, chair of secondary education and faculty advisor to the College Democrats, was told by colleagues back east that he would never get a job at BYU unless he lied about his politics. Coombs came prepared to be truthful, but to his surprise, Wilkinson never asked.²⁵ He got the job.

21. Martin B. Hickman interview, 19 Mar. 1985; Thomas G. Alexander interview, 13 July 1993.

22. Alexander interview.

23. Larry T. Wimmer interview, 28 June 1993.

24. Merle Tanner-White interview, 30 June 1993.

25. C. Garn Coombs interview, 17 May 1993.

Bill Evenson joined the physics faculty in 1970. As a Democrat, he was highly offended when Wilkinson brought a prominent Republican speaker to campus and put BYU's imprimatur on what Evenson terms "egregious political favoritism." Evenson went to a respected senior faculty member, also a Democrat, and asked, "Do I really want to be at a place like this?" His friend said he too had once considered leaving and had even secured another position but got called as a bishop so he stayed. The friend said he had told Harold B. Lee in an interview that he supported church leaders but sometimes could not agree with Apostle Ezra Taft Benson's right-wing politics. Lee, one of Benson's strongest critics,²⁶ said many didn't agree and not to worry about it. That conversation together with the arrival of Dallin H. Oaks, who "brought a breath of fresh air to the campus," convinced Evenson to stay.²⁷ He has since served as an associate academic vice-president and dean of physical and mathematical sciences. Another Democrat in high places.

"There was an enormous change under Dallin H. Oaks," Wimmer agrees. "He made almost no changes in personnel but enormous changes in the climate. It was kind of surprising to those who think structure is the determinant."²⁸

Martin Hickman felt the same. "I think the day Dallin Oaks became president of BYU is probably the greatest day in BYU's history since Maeser opened the door of the first classroom. Dallin turned us around. It may be unfair to say this about Ernie, but Ernie took politics far more seriously than he took anything. Dallin took the church more seriously than he took anything."²⁹

In his inaugural address Oaks said, "Brigham Young University has no political objectives, only intellectual and spiritual ones. . . . our attitude toward matters purely political should be that characterized by Thomas Jefferson, whose first inaugural address counseled that 'error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.'"³⁰

Maurice "Mike" Marchant, retired from the School of Library and Information Science and a former chair of the Utah County Democratic Party, says after Oaks came Democrats started coming out of the closet. They felt good about the new administration.³¹

Oaks established the following policy:

26. See Quinn, 47-48, 57-58, 69-73, 81.

27. William E. Evenson interview, 1 Feb. 1993.

28. Wimmer interview.

29. Hickman interview.

30. Dallin H. Oaks, "Response," in *Addresses Delivered at the Inauguration of Dallin Harris Oaks as Eighth President of Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Friday, the Twelfth of November, Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-one* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1971), 22.

31. Maurice P. "Mike" Marchant interview, 6 May 1993.

Candidates for office are not to use the facilities of the University to obtain lists of names, or any information (except for library research) for use in a political campaign. Campus mail is not to be used to distribute campaign literature or to promote votes. University supplies, equipment and personnel are not to be used in connection with the political activities of the candidate.³²

Also, personnel in university-wide, policy-making positions could not simultaneously hold political posts. Two vice-presidents withdrew as delegates to the Republican state convention as a result of the policy. Deans and directors were advised "to be extremely sensitive when speaking on certain matters since a personal view might be considered by some as University policy."³³

Clearly this was a radical new direction for BYU. In addition, Oaks called for a moratorium on the use of the terms "liberal" and "conservative" on campus³⁴ and attempted to lessen schisms between the religion faculty and other disciplines. He and his successor, Jeffrey R. Holland, who also was serious about maintaining neutrality on campus, made enemies in the process—not among faculty in general but among a small, conservative, insider clique of religion teachers. Just as insider trading is outlawed on Wall Street, so should insider sycophancy be outlawed in the church. It makes life miserable for BYU presidents.

The biggest politically-based fiasco of the Oaks years occurred in 1977. It demonstrated that in spite of attempts to be neutral and create an atmosphere where various ideologies could be discussed in a gospel-centered atmosphere, the university was still very much captive to the right-wing politicization that had infected the church since the 1950s.

Wayne Holley, a BYU alumnus, was chair of the Utah Communist Party. His nephew was a student of Ray Hillam and wanted to know why, if BYU had academic freedom, Holley couldn't speak at the university. Hillam, chair of political science, saw no reason why not (he now admits this was "bad judgment") and made arrangements for Holley to debate with Keith Melville's American political thought class and LaMond Tullis's political ideologies class. Unbeknown to the professors, church officials had earlier tried to excommunicate Holley, but that action had been stopped by Hugh B. Brown.³⁵ Melville says he invited Holley because he had confidence that students could entertain and discuss issues without being propagandized. Tullis, a Republican, had already had

32. *University Handbook*, 11.54 (7 Dec. 1972).

33. Deans and Directors Council Meeting minutes, 7 Oct. 1974, 2, copy in my possession.

34. Oaks, "Response," 22-23.

35. Hillam interview.

a conventional Republican, a conventional Democrat, and Basil Dunn of the John Birch Society speak in his class and thought it appropriate to hear from a Communist. "Tame, little, old Wayne Holley," as Tullis now describes him, was hammered by the students. Tullis says he has learned that one of the best ways to evoke political rationality is to expose students to radicals. "I found that it pushes students to the center; that students see the wild-eyed views of the extreme right and left as impractical."³⁶

Probably nothing would have happened had not Holley, in a speech at a Salt Lake City high school, mentioned that he had spoken at BYU. Word got around, and BYU was called to task. What followed has been described as "Black Thursday" or "Bloody Thursday" at BYU. Although the Holley incident involved only a few political scientists, some forty faculty from history, economics, and political science, apparently all problem areas, were called to a 10 a.m. meeting Thursday, 7 April 1977, and told that Oaks was their advocate with the board and would do all he could to further academics at the university. But they could not expect to rock the boat until it capsized and then count on being rescued. Oaks said there was a point beyond which he could not be of help to them.³⁷

Five days later Apostle Ezra Taft Benson addressed the student body in a devotional, saying: "There is no excuse for any BYU instructor to grant a forum to an avowed Communist for the purpose of teaching communism on this campus. It may be done on other campuses in the United States, but it will not be done here."³⁸

Hickman, recounting the debacle eight years later, said, "Sometimes we stumble into things. If I'd known who the guy was and all of the ramifications of his visit to the university, I wouldn't have approved because I knew that he would use his visit not simply to inform our students but to validate his position. Dallin just fought some battles for us. It's incredible to me that anybody could have been that bold and brave."³⁹

Oaks's bravery most likely cost him his job. He had backed his faculty for nearly a decade in resisting pressure from Wilkinson and Salt Lake City to hire conservative Richard Vetterli in the political science department. Oaks's hand finally was forced in 1979 when the Board of Trustees directed him to hire Vetterli over the faculty's objections. Oaks was "released" without explanation in May of that school year.⁴⁰ It is interesting that Vetterli, who was thought to be a right-wing plant, went on

36. F. LaMond Tullis interview, 24 June 1993.

37. Hickman interview; Bergera and Priddis, 222-23.

38. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 Apr. 1977, A-11.

39. Hickman interview.

40. See "Quick Change of Presidents at BYU: Was It a Hurry-Up Job?" *Utah Holiday*, Aug. 1980, 11-12; and Bergera and Priddis, 224-25.

to gain the respect of his faculty colleagues, produce solid scholarship, and shield the university from certain factions in Salt Lake City.⁴¹ But that's another story.

Several Democrats and Republicans I interviewed say Oaks's efforts toward political neutrality were well intentioned but somewhat quixotic. As one says, "The Oaks administration changed the tone but not the substance much. If Republicans had an advantage earlier, they still did." Another says, "Republicans were being given opportunities on campus that were not extended to Democrats." And another: "There was not a lot of feeling that Democrats were welcome on campus. The Republicans had plenty of money, plenty of support, and no trouble getting high-profile speakers."

Oaks's successor, Jeffrey R. Holland, had to deal with just such an imbalance in October 1980 during the Utah gubernatorial campaign. Utah's first lady Norma Matheson represented her husband, Scott, in a student-sponsored forum with Republican challenger Bob Wright. Prior to the event both parties had been sent a letter that said: "Be aware that this is not a debate and should not be viewed as such. We ask that you direct your comments in favor of your own position rather than against that of your opponent."⁴²

But this was Republican territory. When the student moderator said, "This is not a timid audience, attack the governor," Wright did. When students heckled the first lady and cheered him, Wright played along. Finally, during what was supposed to be a two-minute, uninterrupted closing statement by Mrs. Matheson, she was jeered and had to cut her comments short. She left the stage in tears. Later she said that during the whole campaign, she had never been treated so poorly. It was ugly and painfully embarrassing, not only for BYU but its sponsoring church. The story appeared in newspapers across the country.⁴³

Michael Allen, now on the history faculty, was president of College Democrats at the time. "I gave the closing prayer but I didn't feel good about it," he says. "It didn't seem like an event that should be graced with prayer."⁴⁴

The dean of student life issued a statement saying BYU "simply will not tolerate disrespectful or rude conduct in a campus gathering,"⁴⁵ and

41. Hickman interview and conversations with various faculty.

42. Letter from F. Grant Hulse, Political Week Committee, ASBYU Academics Office, 15 Oct. 1980, copy in my possession.

43. See, for example, *The Evening Sun*, Baltimore, 24 Oct. 1980; *Akron Beacon Journal*, 24 Oct. 1980; *San Jose Mercury*, 24 Oct. 1980.

44. J. Michael Allen interview, 22 June 1993.

45. Statement by David M. Sorenson, Brigham Young University news release, 22 Oct. 1980.

ASBYU officers wrote a letter of apology to Mrs. Matheson. It said, in part, "We express our deepest regret at the lack of respect shown by some to you personally and as the First Lady of Utah. We appreciate your participation on our program and particularly acknowledge your total compliance with the stated guidelines."⁴⁶

Wright overplayed his home-court advantage, and Mrs. Matheson, who was not debating, ultimately won the debate. Wright's handlers attempted to recoup their losses by issuing a news release a week later quoting Wright as saying the BYU administration:

has taken the responsibility for the students and issued me an apology for the way I was treated during a debate on campus last week.

The rudeness displayed by a few students was offensive to both Mrs. Matheson and me.

... I am appreciative to the BYU Administration for realizing this and offering their apology.⁴⁷

I am not aware of an apology issued to Wright, but one never knows what kinds of behind-the-scenes conversations might have gone on. In any event, Wright's people probably figured BYU wanted to avoid further public controversy and therefore would not respond to his statement. They were right. All along BYU felt a public statement from anyone higher than the student officers would imply support from BYU and by extension the church for one side or the other. This unfortunate paralysis resulted in Mrs. Matheson's never receiving an appropriate public apology from BYU. But there was cheering among Democrats and some Republicans when Wright lost, and it was the only bright spot for Democrats in an otherwise politically dismal year. The question remained: "What would have happened had Democrats employed such tactics?" The answer was obvious.

The Wright-Matheson imbroglio marked the beginning of a number of events that kept the nine-year Holland administration on edge as it attempted to walk the tightrope of political neutrality. Democrats were coming out of the closet and speaking up—some quite vociferously.

The most visible was Omar Kader, a Utah-born son of Palestinian Muslim immigrants who came to the United States in 1932.⁴⁸ Kader, a young Omar Sharif look-alike, knew what it meant to be a minority on two counts—one as a Palestinian among Mormons and the other as a Mormon among Palestinians. He has described himself as spokesperson

46. Letter from Jeffrey A. Duke, ASBYU President, and Thomas L. Peterson, ASBYU Academic Vice-president, 23 Oct. 1980, copy in my possession.

47. "Consider the Difference, Vote Wright," News Release, 29 Oct. 1980.

48. Omar Kader interview, 9 May 1993.

for most, if not all, Arab-Palestinian-Muslim-Mormon-liberal Democrats.

Although his parents were Eisenhower Republicans, Kader turned to the Democratic party because of its stand on civil rights. Democrat Hugh Nibley often visited the family to practice Arabic and took the young man under his wing. Kader joined the church at age twenty-four.

"I eventually realized that the people I really admired were Democrats," Kader says. "They were open and charitable. It was the Republicans who were telling us to sell our farm and asking if we wouldn't be happier elsewhere. They wondered why we didn't go back to my parents' homeland."⁴⁹

The belief that contention is of the devil is often invoked among Mormons to stifle opposing viewpoints, but Kader did not fall victim to that silencing technique. His experiences as a minority person taught him the necessity of speaking up—of arguing forcefully. He was a barnstormer whose outspokenness offended even some within his own party, but whether you loved him or hated him, he made it clear that Democrats were beginning to take a more aggressive stance vis-à-vis the Republican juggernaut.

This became obvious at the time of the Wright-Matheson fiasco. Kader, who was faculty advisor to the College Democrats and an assistant to the dean of social sciences, confronted Wright as soon as the prayer was over and said if Wright thought he could get away with that type of abuse at BYU, he was full of a certain smelly substance. This caused Wright to complain to a general authority that a BYU professor had used profanity against him. Kader was made a bishop a short time later.

Evidence of a more aggressive Democratic party, this time at the county level, resurfaced a year later. Local headlines read, "County Democrats Criticize 'Y' Policy," "Demos accuse Y. of enforcing its policy on politics unevenly," and "'Not American Way,' Democrats Charge BYU Treats Them Unfairly."⁵⁰

The flap occurred when Bill Evenson resigned as chair of the Utah County Democratic Party after being appointed director of general education at BYU. Holland, in a letter to Michael T. Miller, chair of the Utah State Democratic Party, had earlier explained:

Because of our relationship to and sponsorship by the LDS Church we feel that it is extremely important to maintain a policy of strict neutrality with regard to political parties. This includes having our major University officers step aside from political roles during the time they are serving in major

49. Ibid.

50. Provo *Daily Herald*, 17 Sept. 1981, 3; *Deseret News*, 18 Sept. 1981, Utah County edition; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 19 Sept. 1981, B-8.

administrative positions. We apply this policy across the board to Republicans, Democrats, or any other political group.⁵¹

The Democrats weren't buying it. They said, in essence, BYU had made Evenson an offer he could not refuse to deprive their party of his strong leadership. Paul Baxter, a life-long Democrat, said in a news article, "BYU has always done everything it could to eliminate the influence of the Democratic Party in Utah County. This is not new but is a tradition which this new president is continuing."⁵²

Democrats hooted at the idea BYU was being fair, pointing out that it allowed four faculty members to serve in the state house and senate. BYU countered that these people were not employed in university-wide, decision-making positions. Besides, the university had three Democrats in high administrative posts who were directly involved in Evenson's new appointment, and it did not seem likely they would participate in the neutering of their own party.

Democratic leaders published the following statement: "Institutions which convey the impression that their employees must voluntarily abridge their constitutional rights by refraining from participation in the political process in order to protect their employment or professional advantage, do not represent the American way of life."⁵³

The university's well-intentioned attempts at neutrality became such a wrangle that it made the Wilkinson era look good. At least back then nobody questioned BYU's neutrality—there was none to question.

Evenson says he never thought the university manipulated his appointment in order to weaken the party. He notes that a church official called after hearing of his resignation and wanted to know what was going on. It was apparent that church leaders too were concerned about political neutrality.⁵⁴

That November the administration braced for further challenges when five BYU personnel—Democrats Omar Kader and Stan Taylor, and Republicans Ray Beckham, Lee Farnsworth, and Howard Nielson—were among those who tentatively threw their hats into the ring for the new third district seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.⁵⁵ Holland sent a memo to all faculty, staff, and administrative personnel on 8 January 1982 in anticipation of a race involving so many BYU people:

As we enter another election year, we encourage all within the BYU

51. Jeffrey R. Holland to Michael T. Miller, 31 Aug. 1981, copy in my possession.

52. *Deseret News*, 18 Sept. 1981, Utah County edition.

53. *Daily Universe*, 22 Sept. 1981, 1.

54. Evenson interview.

55. *Daily Universe*, 19 Nov. 1981, 1.

community to seek and enjoy appropriate participation in the political process. However, because of its relationship to and sponsorship by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young University maintains a policy of institutional neutrality with regard to partisan political activity. In order to insure that private opinions and actions of faculty, staff, or administrative personnel are *not* interpreted as those of BYU, I call your attention to several items drawn from university policy on this subject:

1. Personal expressions of political support should not list or imply BYU affiliation.
2. Personal political opinions or expressions of support for candidates may never be transmitted on BYU stationery.
3. BYU classes and other institutional gatherings may not be used to advocate support for specific candidates, parties, or political programs unless authorized by the President.

More detailed policies apply to those at the university who wish to run for public office and are outlined in the University Handbook.

The purpose and function of a university demand that the members of its internal community be exemplary men and women in all matters of honor and integrity. All BYU personnel are urged to remember this special responsibility as you exercise your constitutional privileges.⁵⁶

Later that year the First Presidency issued a political neutrality statement.⁵⁷ Things were looking hopeful. Then everything fell apart.

In the primary campaign between Republican contenders Nielson and Beckham, Democrats discovered that several students in one of Beckham's communications classes were working on his campaign. It was a standard requirement each year for students in this class to get involved in a business, government, or campaign project, and a few that year had chosen to help with their professor's campaign. To his credit, Beckham had received permission from his department chair for the student involvement and had made provisions for grading to be handled by other professors to avoid a conflict of interest.

Ann Barnes, chair of the County Democratic Party, and several other Democratic leaders accused Beckham of violating university policy and asked Holland to investigate. Early in September the president responded with a letter to Barnes, essentially clearing Beckham of intentionally violating BYU policy and stating that everything had been put right. But in trying to show the Democrats that the university was going out of its way to be scrupulously fair, the letter explained too much. It contained loaded words such as "disappointment," "error in judgment," and "injury" that could be used as political ammunition against Beck-

56. Memo from Jeffrey R. Holland to all university personnel, 8 Jan. 1982, copy in my possession.

57. LDS Church First Presidency statement, 1 July 1982, copy in my possession.

ham.⁵⁸

The temptation was too great. The letter, although viewed as private by Holland, was released to the media. Some blamed Nielson's people. They denied it. Others charged the Democrats who, thinking they probably couldn't win in the general election, felt Nielson was more to their liking than Beckham.⁵⁹ They also denied releasing the letter. However, one respected Democrat I interviewed said he did not know who had done it and did not want to know but thought the leak had to come from one of the original recipients of the letter. In any event the university, which had been trying so ardently to be politically neutral, was now charged with having damaged Beckham's campaign.

In its defense, BYU claimed it had been under "pressure" to give Democrats a letter.⁶⁰ Democrats countered with a three-page, somewhat self-serving news release:

We can sympathize for the extreme pressure President Holland is under. However, it does not come from the Democratic Party. It is an internal problem within the University. It comes from President Holland's efforts to get the July 1, Church policy taken seriously. Violations of a policy from the First Presidency of the LDS Church within the University undoubtedly cause him great pressure.

The State and Utah County Democratic Party support the Church's statement of July 1, 1982 and will continue to do as President Holland has requested. . . .

We wish President Holland well in his continued campaign to insure that the Church and University policies of fairness and impartiality apply to all parties and candidates.⁶¹

BYU was caught in a no-win situation. When administrators tried to smooth trouble in one area, it erupted elsewhere. This was especially hard on a president who desired so much to be friends with everyone. BYU was learning the facts of political life—it's impossible to be squeaky clean.

After Nielson won the primary, his people produced a campaign video showing him speaking to a BYU class taught by Lee Farnsworth, a Nielson campaigner.⁶² It appeared that Republicans thought BYU was not serious about its policies. Nielson consented not to use the video after BYU officials protested.⁶³

58. Jeffrey R. Holland to Ann Barnes, 2 Sept. 1982, copy in my possession.

59. Evenson interview.

60. Provo *Daily Herald*, 13 Oct. 1982, 1.

61. Press release from Michael Miller of the State Democratic Executive Committee and Ann Barnes of the Utah County Democratic Committee, 12 Oct. 1982, copy in my possession.

62. Provo *Daily Herald*, 7 Oct. 1982, 1.

63. *Daily Universe*, 7 Oct. 1982, 3.

The roller coaster ride continued. In late September 1982 the administration contacted county and state leaders of both parties to reiterate BYU's policies about not campaigning on campus and to ask that the opening of BYU's newly expanded football stadium on the 25th not be used for political purposes. Democrats complied, but Senator Orrin Hatch's people handed out campaign balloons in front of the stadium prior to the game. Not a good day for BYU. It appeared the university was still granting favored party status to the Republicans, but that was not the big issue. BYU lost to Air Force, 38 to 39.

Democrats claimed a victory on 19 October when Arizona Republican senator Barry Goldwater canceled his speech one hour before he was to appear on BYU's Political Week program. Democrats had protested against allowing a nationally-known Republican to speak on campus during an election year when no comparable Democrat had been scheduled. The *Daily Herald* reported: "A spokesman for BYU declared today that Senator Goldwater 'canceled because of the illness of his wife. That's all we have to say about it.'"⁶⁴ For Democrats, that last sentence spoke volumes.

That same month Nancy Stowe Kader was responsible for a move that significantly boosted Democratic morale at BYU. Kader is an excellent organizer, an articulate advocate of Democratic causes, and was considered by some to be even more effective than her husband Omar. As Utah County campaign manager for Ted Wilson's U.S. Senate bid against incumbent Orrin Hatch, she placed a half-page ad in the *Daily Universe* that stated: "The following private citizens of Utah, exercising our full faculties, acknowledge our intent to Vote for Ted Wilson for the U.S. Senate and encourage all our friends to do likewise."⁶⁵

64. *Daily Herald*, 19 Oct. 1982, 3.

65. *Daily Universe*, 28 Oct. 1982, 15. Signers were, in order of listing: Maurice P. Marchant, Clayton M. White, James E. Faulconer, C. Garn Coombs, Cardell K. Jacobson, Joseph R. Murphy, Donald Q. Cannon, Carol T. Smith, John F. Hall III, Thomas F. Rogers, Mark L. Grover, J. R. Kearn, Russell N. Horiuchi, Philip R. Kunz, Thomas G. Alexander, Dwight Blood, John L. Sorensen, J. Lynn England, Robert C. Bennion, Ronald L. Urry, Samuel C. Monson, Marjorie Wight, Roy K. Bird, Richard A. Hansen, James R. Barnes, Blair and Margie Holmes, Hugh Nibley, David L. Evans, Todd A. Britsch, Anthony W. Ferguson, Jean Anne Waterstradt, Merle Tanner-White, Joseph R. Murdock, Malcolm R. Thorp, Stan A. Taylor, Marvin S. Hill, Evan T. Peterson, Samuel R. Rushforth, Ethel C. Phipps, D. Eugene Mead, Omar Kader, Jack D. Brotherson, David J. Dalton, Delora P. Bertelson, Edward A. Geary, Marion J. Bentley, Paul H. Thompson, Dennis Kenji Shiozawa, Paul R. Thomas, Thomas H. Brown, Glenn R. Williams, Elouise M. Bell, Ford L. Stevenson, Neil L. York, Eugene England, Alan F. Keele, James R. Christianson, Stan L. Albrecht, Douglas M. Campbell, Roger C. Flick, Reba L. Keele, Donald H. Howard, George S. Tate, Robert E. Riggs, John F. Seggar, Kate L. Kirkham, Duane E. Jeffrey, Elizabeth Holloman, James L. Farmer, William S. Bradshaw, Zane G. Alder, J. Clifton Fleming, Ted Lyon, Peter L. Crawley, Wayne W. Clark, Sante Matteo, John B. Harris, Stanley L. Welsh, Richard C. Poulsen, David E. Bohn, Reid N. Nibley, and Norma S. Davis.

Russian professor Tom Rogers, who later served as LDS mission president in St. Petersburg, Russia, was one of 83 signers and recalls, "I felt especially fortunate to be aligned with some of the most revered faculty at BYU."⁶⁶ Mike Marchant also was pleased to be in the company of such "quality scholars." Earlier when applying for a position in the School of Library Science, Marchant went to friend Reid Nibley and asked if he would be the only Democrat on campus. Reid replied, "Well, there's my brother Hugh."⁶⁷ Now there was more than just a handful of publicly identifiable Democrats at the school. This was a star-studded list of top scholars, many of whom held, or later would hold, chair, dean, and vice-presidential positions at the university. Hardly an "undesirable element in American society," as Wilkinson is alleged to have said,⁶⁸ although a few of them and a couple of newer faculty, who happen to be Democrats, have been implicitly accused of being an undesirable element in BYU society.

Not to be outdone, Republicans placed a full-page ad in the *Universe* four days later containing names of 139 Hatch supporters.⁶⁹ That did not bother the Democrats. They boasted an excellent showing considering they were outnumbered about four-to-one.

In 1988 in what must have seemed like reverse discrimination, Democrats were given cause to believe Republicans sometimes got the short end of the stick at BYU. Arch-conservative Evan Mecham, Arizona's first Mormon governor and a man who believed he was "divinely guided" in office,⁷⁰ had been impeached 4 April and was facing a recall election and criminal charges in connection with alleged campaign fund violations. As what *Newsweek* called "Arizona's Holy War"⁷¹ developed, College Republicans invited Mecham to speak at BYU so students could see a more balanced picture of Arizona politics.⁷² The club's faculty advisor refused to approve the invitation because of BYU speaker's policy that states:

The speaker must not in his personal life (as reflected in the news media and common understanding of the public) have committed acts of immorality, dishonesty, or other conduct that would make it inappropriate for the Church Educational System to feature him as a speaker and thus as a person

66. Thomas F. Rogers interview, 5 May 1993.

67. Marchant interview.

68. *Deseret News*, 18 Sept. 1981, Utah County edition. The full quote from Democrat Grant Wightman reads: "I remember as a local labor union official how former President (Ernest L.) Wilkinson denounced us to the BYU students as an undesirable element in the American Society."

69. *Daily Universe*, 1 Nov. 1982, 12.

70. *New York Times*, 13 Mar. 1988.

71. *Newsweek*, 1 Feb. 1988, 28.

72. *Provo Daily Herald*, 17 May 1988, 2.

whose life and advice are an appropriate model for students in an educational system with our ideals.⁷³

Although the press was not particularly pro-Mecham, it took BYU to task for not inviting him to speak. "BYU, a fountainhead of learning, should welcome Mecham," read the headline in an *Arizona Republic* column. The *Phoenix Gazette* editorialized, "This is academic freedom at BYU?" and the *San Antonio Light* said, "Mormon university bars Evan Mecham."⁷⁴ I have more than forty news clippings from across the nation that voice similar sentiments. Even Steve Benson, whose *Arizona Republic* cartoons had lambasted Mecham, drew a cartoon showing a BYU worker adding an eleventh commandment, "No Mecham," to BYU's other ten: no smoking, drinking, drugs, Pepsi, long hair, beards, short skirts, sex, fibbing, cheating.⁷⁵ But with an LDS spokesperson saying, "It would be inappropriate for the Church to intrude on Arizona politics,"⁷⁶ BYU was not about to invite Mecham to campus. As Robert McDougall, managing editor of the *Daily Herald*, interpreted it, "[A]n invitation to campus would be seen by many as an act of absolution, an embrace from the university, and by implication, the Church, for one of its faithful."⁷⁷ On the other hand, Mecham supporters claimed the BYU snub was tantamount to convicting the man before his trial. Mecham was cleared of all criminal charges in June, and BYU put out the welcome mat.

Another bright spot on the Democratic horizon was the 1990 Bill Or-

73. BYU form, "Request for Approval of Off-Campus Speaker," n.d., copy in my possession.

74. *Arizona Republic*, 22 May 1988, C-2; *Phoenix Gazette*, 20 May, 1988; *San Antonio Light*, 19 May 1988. Associate academic vice-president F. LaMond Tullis explained BYU's position as follows:

For the record, Evan Mecham has not been "banned" from the campus of Brigham Young University. Pending the conclusion of his trial, the University has declined to offer him a public forum here. The administration's position is both clear and reasonable: no one legally indicted on criminal charges is given a forum; once the legal process is settled, invitations may be extended on their merits.

Contrary to representations being made, the University did not invite and then withdraw an invitation to Mr. Mecham. A student group extended an invitation and made press announcements that have been construed as University sanctioned. The University's refusal to confirm the students' invitation has been interpreted as impugning Mr. Mecham's character. Quite the contrary. BYU respects the legal process and abides by the generally accepted norm that a person is guilty only when so proven. In the meantime, we decline to offer forums while court proceedings are underway (letter to various editors from F. LaMond Tullis, 20 May 1988, copy in my possession).

75. This and other Mecham cartoons are reproduced in Eduardo Pagan, "Razing Arizona: The Clash in the Church over Evan Mecham," *Sunstone* 12 (Mar. 1988): 15-21.

76. *Newsweek*, 1 Feb. 1988, 28.

77. Provo *Daily Herald*, 29 May 1988, 6.

ton victory over Karl Snow, a BYU administrator who had taken leave to run for the 3rd Congressional seat being vacated by Nielson. Democrats had smugly watched as the Republicans self-destructed in a bitter primary race between Snow and ultraconservative John Harmer, and then as Harmer people continued to attack Snow in the general election. What was particularly sweet for Democrats was a last-ditch effort by Snow's advisors in Salt Lake City who, thinking they understood the mindset of Utah County, ran a full-page ad in a local paper pointing to the fact that Orton was single while Snow had a large family. The ad was offensive and backfired.⁷⁸ Maybe Republicans weren't so predicable after all.

Throughout the Holland years, the university continued to emphasize political neutrality, and the tradition appeared to be continuing under the new president, Rex E. Lee, whose administration published a six-page neutrality statement on 1 October 1989. The BYU community was hopeful that their new president would bring a more independent leadership to the school. He was financially well off, highly successful as an attorney, and had been U.S. Solicitor General in the Reagan administration where he had argued some fifty cases before the Supreme Court. He had the mystical aura that "church-broke" bureaucrats stand in awe of, he had been out in the real world. Lee was quick of mind, sometimes refreshingly—sometimes offensively—flippant, and thrived on the give-and-take of a good argument. Above all, he seemed fair—an every man's and every woman's advocate, for he had argued contrasting views in his numerous court cases. Democrats felt good because he included several of their party in his administration—the academic vice-president, several associate vice-presidents, and BYU's legal counsel.

Thus it came as a bitter surprise to Democrats and others that Lee would allow the university to be pulled into a highly partisan George Bush political rally in July 1992. It had all the trappings of a political convention—none of an academic forum. BYU people led the cheers, and the crowd acted as if it were at a basketball game against the University of Utah. A *Salt Lake Tribune* editorial described it well:

For all their effort to host President Bush in a politically neutral manner, BYU authorities were steamrolled when the politicians descended on them. Mr. Bush, in fact, was a reasonably affable guest; it was the Utah contingent that lacked self-restraint. . . .

Implying that Democrats are illiterate—"I was a Democrat until I learned to read and write"—Sen. Hatch indulged a low-brow sort of wit. And by saying in so many words that Democrats' '92 president-vice president nominees . . . have never held a real job, Sen. Garn also compromised whatever lofty commentary he might have otherwise delivered.⁷⁹

78. *Daily Universe*, 8 Nov. 1990, 1.

79. *Salt Lake Tribune*, 21 July 1992, A-10.

Various BYU alumni, faculty, and the state's Democrats pronounced themselves "scandalized, appalled or downright angry," the editorial said. "BYU found itself perceived as having taken a GOP position in the current presidential campaign." "Moreover, BYU officials are now awkwardly offering Democrats equal opportunity. To do what, also issue stultifying insult from the university's premises?"

Insult was added to injury when Democratic Congressman Bill Orton, who had recently supported Bush legislation, was not invited to the stand. Just as well—it was a circus. In the space of two hours BYU had retrogressed more than two decades. The university had been prostituted by those who had little regard for its educational mission, and Democrats felt they were in a cruel Twilight Zone time warp. "If we tried to do the same at a Clinton rally, there'd be a hue and cry so loud we'd never hear the end of it," one Democrat now laments.

Actually all the hoopla did not do the Republicans that much good. Utah County, which is about 80 percent Republican, gave only 56.76 percent of its votes to Bush. Ross Perot garnered 22.7 percent, Clinton received 13 percent, and James "Bo" Gritz got 6.8 percent. And, not to rub it in, Democrat Bill Orton won a second term in office.⁸⁰

One positive result, as explained by a student working the College Democrats' booth two winters ago, is that club members feel they are getting better treatment from BYU. "They [administrators] all know what happened and are going overboard to be cooperative," he said.⁸¹

Just how many Democrats are there at BYU? It is difficult to determine, but an informal *Daily Universe* poll conducted in 1992 indicates that 50 percent of the faculty consider themselves Republican, 28 percent say they are either independent or not affiliated with any party, and 22 percent say they are Democrats.⁸² That comes to about 300 Democrats among a total of some 1,400 full-time faculty—definitely enough for a foot in the door. If the same percentage holds among BYU's nearly 33,000 full-time students, there could be as many as 7,000 Democrats in the student body, although this is not likely.

The perception among people I interviewed is that the social sciences, fine arts, humanities, biology and agriculture, some of the hard sciences, honors education, and, surprisingly, law and management probably have more Democrats than other disciplines on campus. Marchant says he was always amused at the number of Democrats in law because Wilkinson had wanted so much for the school to be conservative so it could save the Constitution.⁸³

80. Utah County Election Information System, 1992 General Election, Official Election Returns by District, 9 Nov. 1992, copy in my possession.

81. Conversation with unidentified College Democrat volunteer, 14 Jan. 1993.

82. *Universe*, 23 June 1992, 1.

83. Marchant interview.

Education, religion, continuing education, and non-academic administrative areas were perceived as being strongly Republican while engineering, physical education, and nursing did not seem to have any particular political earmarks, though most speculated they were Republican.

In the political science department, where politics is king, Republican Lou Midgley says the split is probably about even, though he is not sure. He points out, however, that the highest profile Democrat at BYU is exit pollster David Magleby, chair of the department and a regular consultant to BYU's administration.⁸⁴

Marchant says at one time it was thought that at least half of BYU's deans were Democrats, but apparently no one was brazen enough to ask. It was not an issue or condition of employment.

However, I did discover one instance where politics was discussed in a hiring interview but not by a Republican. Lyman Smart was an English professor and prominent Democratic leader who eventually became chair of the state Democratic Party. In 1963 he served on a department committee that interviewed Richard Cracroft for a faculty position. He boldly asked Cracroft what his political leanings were. Cracroft, trying to duck the question, said his brother Paul had served as an aide to Senator Wallace Bennett. "Never mind that, what about you?" Smart asked. Cracroft responded that he had Republican inclinations. "Don't you know that being a Republican in an English department is like being a black in the Ku Klux Klan?" Smart retorted. Cracroft was hired and eventually became a Democrat. He says English faculties across the nation are generally Democratic but quickly asserts that he and many of his colleagues are "moderate" Democrats. "We tend to keep our profiles a bit low when Democrats come out with things we aren't thrilled about," he says.⁸⁵

Some of the people I interviewed said being a Democrat at BYU may be tolerable, but off campus in the meeting houses and neighborhoods of Happy Valley it's another story.

Tim Slover, an assistant professor in theater and film, recalls as a sixteen-year-old going out with another student to distribute literature for U.S. presidential candidate George McGovern. It was a devastating experience, especially for his female partner who was not LDS. Members of the church tore up their literature, swore at them, and exhibited a vituperative, paranoid mindset that had his companion in tears a number of times. "It marked me at that young age," he says. "I came to feel that hot rhetoric and lack of logical argument were characteristics of conservatives." He has since learned that such traits are exhibited by the extremes

84. Midgley interview.

85. Richard H. Cracroft interview, 21 July 1993.

in both parties.⁸⁶

Alan Keele tells of Democrats in his neighborhood having to obtain a court injunction against a BYU employee who would stand on the sidewalk in front the polls and greet people as they came to vote. He would shake their hands and say something like: "Now brother, I hope you realize which is the true party and what responsibility you have as a church member to vote correctly. I'm sure you know that one party is sanctioned by the church and the other is not. Be sure to vote for the true and inspired party."⁸⁷

Gary Lambert of the French faculty says when he moved to Orem in 1969 a neighbor said, "I just thought I'd let you know that this ward is entirely Republican, and we are really proud that we have 100 percent." Lambert, an independent, smiled and thought to himself, "Not any more."⁸⁸

Donald Q. Cannon, associate dean of religious education, says his daughter came home upset one day when a neighbor verbally abused her for wearing a Clinton button. He demanded to know how she could be a Democrat when her father was a professor at BYU and she had been raised in Orem.⁸⁹

Nancy Kader, while serving as chair of the county Democrats, found Provo's July 4th Freedom Festival somewhat paradoxical. This highly touted celebration of America's freedoms and Constitution would not allow political candidates to ride in the parade unless they were incumbents. Such regulations were necessary to keep the parade from becoming a political free-for-all, but since most elected officials were Republicans, Republicans got most of the exposure. "Democrats were a minority and we were being discriminated against," Kader says. "We couldn't change the system because it was Republican controlled but fought back by slipping in Democratic candidates to ride with Gunn McKay."⁹⁰

Garn Coombs has not been shy about speaking up in church meetings when, for instance, the gospel doctrine teacher reads from John Birch literature or promotes a particular candidate. The class usually sticks to the gospel after polite objections are raised, he says. Once he walked out of a high council meeting when a council member giving the spiritual message read from a congressman's newsletter. The stake president brought Coombs back, and a like incident never occurred again.⁹¹ Per-

86. Tim Slover interview, 25 June 1993.

87. Alan F. Keele interview, 7 May 1993.

88. L. Gary Lambert interview, 2 Aug. 1993.

89. Donald Q. Cannon interview, 7 May 1993.

90. Nancy Kader interview, 19 July 1993.

91. Coombs interview.

haps if Democrats spoke up more often there would not be so many stories to tell about conservatives who, unchallenged, seem to take for granted that everyone thinks as they do.

Actually, there are Democrats who are speaking up. I found them among the students at BYU. Frankly, it was surprising to see how active they are, though small in number, and what they have been able to accomplish.

Bryan Waterman, who is now a graduate student at Boston University, was prodded into Democratic activity as a freshman when fellow students asked him to hang a Bush-Quayle poster in his window. He declined, saying he wasn't a Republican. "What are you then, a Communist?" was the reply. He knew then he had to do something. He later became an editor of the *Student Review* and used that position to promote education and debate on political issues.⁹²

Brian Dille, a senior in political science and a vice-president of College Democrats, was reared in a conservative Republican, mostly Mormon, town in southern Idaho. He was told by seminary teachers that Democrats are bad, that you could get closer to God if you were conservative, and that one could not be a good member of the church and be a Democrat. It may seem strange, but it was at BYU that he came to the realization he sided more with Democrats. He wanted to be a voice for those without a voice.⁹³ "My Mom tells me she didn't raise me to be a Democrat, but in reality, she did. She taught me not to discriminate, to be open-minded, and to respect others," he explains.

Dille says more than 600 students signed up with College Democrats in the fall of 1992, but the problem was keeping them active. Some, having been raised as good Mormon Republicans, saw the club as a dissident, underground organization and joined to display their youthful rebelliousness. They usually were not serious about politics. College Democrats do not have funds for parties and socials like Young Republicans, but the few who turn out for business meetings, between ten and twenty, are a powerhouse in their own right. And, miracle of miracles, they interact well with Young Republicans and the ultraconservatives on campus.

Dille and others I interviewed say as BYU becomes increasingly selective about admissions, the demographics of the student body are shifting. More and more students are coming from outside the Mormon Republican strongholds of Utah, Idaho, and Arizona and are better educated, less provincial, and more aware of world problems than students generally were in the past. They are more open-minded, they are think-

92. Bryan Waterman interview, 22 Apr. 1993.

93. Brian Dille interview, 28 June 1993.

ing more for themselves, and they understand the difference between politics and religion. "They are more sophisticated and not as willing to buy into the idea that you have to fit a certain political mold to be an active member of the Church," Dille says.

As evidence of this, he recalls speaking at a campus Soap Box forum to challenge the letter that is cited at the beginning of this essay. "I said it was ridiculous to be judgmental about a person's spirituality based on politics, and I got a standing ovation."⁹⁴

Student Democrats write newspaper columns and letters to the editor on a regular basis. One especially articulate column by Dille, Sara Jones, John Radford, and Heather Wynder appeared in the off-campus *Student Review* before the 1992 elections. Two excerpts follow:

A major roadblock to making informed decisions is the practice of buying into partisan stereotypes. These abound on both sides of the aisle, with the redneck-racist-uneducated-frenzied-patriot-Republicans pointing fingers at the pinko-commie-bleeding-heart-liberal-intellectual Democrats who point back.

...

We can safely speak for all BYU Democrats who have, at one time or another, faced the horrified friend who has just learned we are Democrats. "But," they say, "how can you possibly be in favor of killing babies?" Our answer is that both parties have extremists. Being pro-choice or supporting gay rights is no more a requirement for being a Democrat than is being isolationist or supporting David Duke a requirement for being a Republican. There is room for reason in the center of both parties.⁹⁵

College Democrats organized and gained BYU approval for a pro-choice, pro-life debate on campus, and they set up non-partisan student seminars in the fall of 1993 for prevention of racism, discrimination, gender bias, and sexual harassment. Dille explained: "If all Republicans can do is poke fun at Democrats and use clichés to defend their position, they are going to have difficulty in the real world where they are a minority. Rational debate between us actually strengthens Republicans and helps us all, no matter what party we are in."⁹⁶

Another sign of emerging political health at BYU was the rise of *The Conservative Edge*, a "Politically Incorrect" off-campus newspaper, founded by student Nick Zukin. He believed BYU should be more liberal in its policies. "BYU puts too much emphasis on suppression of contro-

94. Ibid.

95. *Student Review*, 28 Oct. 1992, 5.

96. Dille interview.

versy and debate," he said.⁹⁷ That doesn't sound like a typical BYU conservative, but his attitude is being expressed by increasing numbers of students.

Zukin invited College Democrats to take a full page in each issue of his paper to voice their opinions. Democrats had "The Left Page" opposite "The Right Page," where Zukin and his staff hold forth.

As Zukin explained:

We invited the College Democrats to contribute for two reasons. One, there is really no place they can go to engage in debate on the issues other than here. Two, we are pretty much convinced that our position on the issues cannot suffer from comparison with theirs—and if it can, then we need to wise up. The Forum page is truly a debate. If we lose, we lose. It is a risk we feel we ought to take.⁹⁸

And how do Democrats feel?

The primary reason we feel we should be a part of this paper is that the BYU community needs a forum to discuss political matters.

BYU begs for a rational forum of discussion. . . . In the absence of such a forum, most political discussion and arguments occur over the cafeteria table and in the halls of the library. In such an environment arguments are seldom well thought out and the "winner" is usually the loudest proponent. Worn-out partisan clichés are sometimes the only tool used to persuade.⁹⁹

A friend recently had a conversation with someone who thought BYU is right in trying to rid itself of "undesirable" faculty because students are not mature enough to be exposed to diverse issues and ideas. If the above exchange between young conservatives and Democrats is any indicator, it sounds as if students can handle diversity far better than their elders.

Among the people I interviewed, some of the most cogent reasoning in support of strengthening the Democratic influence on campus and in the community came from Republicans.

Hal Miller, at the time dean of general and honors education, is a registered Republican and former Goldwaterite who says he has become more independent with time. "I found myself moving away from those who want clear demarcations and battle lines. I am more inclined to resist identifying differences," he says. Miller has situated himself more with those who are slow to condemn, adamant about remaining open, willing to discourse about differences, and striving to see the merits of people

97. Nicholas A. Zukin interview, 23 June 1993.

98. *The Conservative Edge*, 5 Mar. 1993, 9.

99. *Ibid.*, 8.

and arguments that, at first blush, seem repugnant. "I am loath to be absolutistic," he says. "I believe we should consider carefully and make judgments thoughtfully and on the merits. And we should allow and encourage all others to do the same."¹⁰⁰

Nominal Republican Dick Poll, former history professor at BYU and Western Illinois University, now deceased, said he wished Utah County had a two-party system. "I believe in the two-party system because only when you have vigorous interaction will you have the best government," he said. "Antipathy toward politics because of antipathy toward government is prevalent everywhere but nowhere more than in Utah County."

Poll cited Goethe: "Nothing is more terrible than to see ignorance in action," and commented, "There is a lot of ignorance on the part of church members in regard to politics." He explained that success-oriented, middle-class Mormons put themselves, their families, their jobs, and their church way ahead of their citizenship responsibilities. Their allegiance to the Constitution is superficial—an emotional, slogan-based, knee-jerk sort of patriotism.¹⁰¹

Kent Harrison, a professor of physics, is a soft-spoken but powerful advocate for equality and human rights. He is active in the Republican party. When I referred to the letter about Satan's foot in the door, I could sense his blood pressure rising. Harrison says that type of thoughtless diatribe makes him want to climb the walls. As argument against it, he quotes John Stuart Mill, as cited at the beginning of this paper.

"I think it's wonderful and essential that Democrats have a voice at BYU," he says. "I am delighted when I see a variety of opposing views at BYU even though it makes some people uncomfortable. If some get upset, tough. Republicans need to be brought up short once in a while because we don't have all the answers. All parties are groping, and there are good ideas on all sides. I shudder when I hear talk among Republicans of creating a veto-proof legislature."

Harrison refers to the current furor on campus and says regardless of the merits, he is pleased to see students and faculty speaking out on behalf of what they believe. It's healthy and it's vital to the strength and growth of any serious academic enterprise that is striving for excellence.¹⁰²

The Democrats I talked to are highly intelligent, sensitive individuals who are thoroughly dedicated to their church, school, and nation. I sensed among them a feeling of betrayal because of the treatment they receive at the hands of a majority that claims to be Christian and whose pioneer heritage ought to have taught them what it means to be a minority.

100. Harold L. Miller, Jr., interview, 30 June 1993.

101. Richard D. Poll interview, 24 June 1993.

102. B. Kent Harrison interview, 28 June 1993.

They feel betrayed by the politicization of the church and God. As one independent told me, "People who put deity on their side and then say that what God thinks is based on what they think are traveling down the wrong path." It is a form of taking the name of God in vain.

They feel dismayed over tendencies toward a one-party church and one-party university but take heart in the fact that in spite of its seeming power, the radical right has failed in its long-standing attempts to fully polarize either the church or the university.

They are amused by BYU's condescending attitude toward Democrats. "They put up with us so they can tell the world there is diversity at BYU," one student told me. "Give me a break," he says. "Anyplace else it wouldn't be an issue."

Given what has been described as a Torquemadian atmosphere on campus, some Democrats feel a bit uneasy these days. That's not to say that Democrats are the cause of the current controversies. But it does appear that people involved in social activism, anti-nuclear-weapons demonstrations, peace gatherings, minority awareness movements, Amnesty International, women's rights activities, liberation theology, and anything else that pushes the establishment's buttons usually are liberal and naturally identify more with Democrats than Republicans.

Because education tends to make people more liberal in their disciplines and outlooks on life, it is viewed in certain conservative circles as a dangerous thing. Democrats, being the "liberals" that we all know they are, thus fear what this means for conservative BYU and for their future as educators at such an institution. As one faculty member told me, "We as a culture are being taught to think for ourselves less and less."

Democrats have benefitted somewhat from BYU's political neutrality policies, but they wish such policies weren't necessary. How refreshing and how much more truly educational it would be if students could be exposed to a variety of political views without worrying about whether the Mormon population at large sees any particular view as being church sanctioned. BYU is such a jewel in the church's crown that it has to cater more to its public image than to its students' needs. This means that much energy goes into maintaining a façade of benign tranquility, and speakers like Washington columnist Jack Anderson, who is too controversial,¹⁰³ get turned away. At the same time BYU officials wonder why they get such poor attendance at the university's forums.

It should be noted that faculty actually can and do expose students to a variety of viewpoints, but they have to do so quietly and stay out of the public spotlight. Obviously, BYU is not a healthy place for postmodernists.

103. Marchant interview.

The birth of partisan politics at BYU came under Ernest Wilkinson who could be likened to a well-meaning but strict, overly-protective, highly-opinionated parent who attempts to shield his children from the truth about Santa Claus. From Wilkinson to the present are the teenage years, marked by attempts to carefully screen the presentation of opposing viewpoints. It's as if the teenagers are allowed to go to certain pre-selected movies as long as they are accompanied by adults. Will the BYU political scene reach adulthood? Many think not, but it could happen if church members came to understand that what goes on at BYU is an educational process and not some religious sign indicating which way God wants them to vote. It is fascinating that BYU has so much power—too much for its own good. How much more effective the university could be as an educational institution if Mormons looked more directly to church leaders for guidance instead of trying to interpret church policy, doctrine, and temperature through the actions of the university.

Yes, Democrats do exist at BYU, and no, they are not Satanic. Their presence on campus, though not always appreciated, has strengthened the university in many ways. For the sake of the nation, the Constitution, freedom, democracy, the two-party system, the church, and especially BYU, may all bleeding-heart, intellectual, liberal Mormon Democrats thrive and prosper. And may all BYU closet Democrats come out into the open. You've got company. And you are needed.