

# The Richard D. Poll and J. Kenneth Davies Cases: Politics and Religion at BYU during the Wilkinson Years

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*[My] theme this morning [is] Two Contending Forces. Those forces are known and have been designated by different terms throughout the ages. "In the beginning" they were known as Satan on the one hand, and Christ on the other. . . . In these days, they are called "domination by the state," on one hand, "personal liberty," on the other; communism on one hand, free agency on the other.*

*As a text I say to you, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." (Josh. 24:15.) – David O. McKay<sup>1</sup>*

During the cold war years after World War II, Mormons, including some Church leaders, increasingly infused national concerns about Communism with strong moral and religious overtones. J. Reuben Clark Jr.(1871–1961), first counselor in the First Presidency, asserted in 1949: "Our real enemies are communism and its running mate, socialism."<sup>2</sup> Almost four years later, Church President David O. McKay (1873–1970) urged: "Every child in America [should be] taught the superiority of our way of life, of our Constitution and the sacredness of the freedom of the individual."<sup>3</sup> Communism, he stressed, "has as its ultimate achievement

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and victory the destruction of capitalism” and the “undermin[ing] of the Restored Gospel.”<sup>4</sup> “It is as much a part of the religion of American Latter-day Saints,” the *LDS Church News* asserted, “to accept the Constitution of the United States, and defend it, as it is to believe in baptism or the resurrection.”<sup>5</sup>

This emphasis among LDS authorities on the growth of Communism and what they viewed as allied economic and political evils manifested itself most dramatically in Ernest L. Wilkinson’s 1951 appointment as president of Brigham Young University. A Republican Party convert and critic of the federal government, Wilkinson (1899–1978) personified the conservative economic, political, and social beliefs of his ecclesiastical superiors. He needed little encouragement, for example, when Church official Stephen L Richards (1879–1959) charged him at his inauguration to “implant in youth a deep love of country and a reverential regard for the Constitution of the United States.”<sup>6</sup> “This institution [i.e., BYU],” Wilkinson had earlier vowed in a letter to Apostle John A. Widtsoe, “is definitely committed to a philosophy which is the antithesis of that espoused by the communists. . . . More than any other school, Brigham Young University has a better basis for teaching correct principles of government.”<sup>7</sup> Wilkinson hoped to establish an exemplary institution of higher learning where a loyal, patriotic faculty would “teach ‘correct’ economic doctrines—doctrines which would assist in salvaging the American system of free enterprise from threatened extinction.”<sup>8</sup>

Concurrent with the years of Wilkinson’s presidency (1951–71) was the emphasis nationally on routing “un-American” faculty from U.S. universities. In fact, during the height of America’s involvement in Vietnam, the number of dismissals for “un-American sympathies” more than doubled.<sup>9</sup> For Wilkinson, the possibility—however remote—of anti-American infiltration impacted his governance of the LDS school.<sup>10</sup> Wilkinson believed that the U.S. Constitution was heaven-sanctioned and that both conservative politics and laissez-faire economics were the fruits of divine inspiration. Like the Church’s officers, he endowed free-market capitalism with a religious imprimatur and measured loyalty to the Church and to BYU accordingly. For Wilkinson and others of like orientation, restored religion and conservative politics were in-

separable; unorthodox political beliefs were as potentially dangerous as unorthodox doctrinal beliefs. “We are clearly in the midst of a great campaign to create a socialistic state,” he stated, adding, “Liberals want to make the BYU a pulpit for all of the left-wing groups in the country. . . . How to get [a more patriotic faculty] is a real problem,” he recorded.<sup>11</sup>

As he labored to secure a sufficiently patriotic faculty, Wilkinson adopted a variety of measures to promote and guarantee political and religious orthodoxy. In the early 1950s, he solicited individual reports of alleged faculty misconduct.<sup>12</sup> Later, he convened special “fact finding” committees to investigate and document complaints.<sup>13</sup> By the mid-1960s, he turned to more aggressive approaches. The best known of these, the so-called “1966 BYU student spy” ring, has been treated elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Two additional instances of Wilkinson’s attempts to promote an “orthodox” faculty are the focus of this article. These instances are the controversial cases of historian Richard D. Poll and economist J. Kenneth Davies. Their cases contribute to an understanding of the intellectual history of BYU and of the Church generally during the mid-twentieth century. They speak directly to Wilkinson’s attempts to cultivate a conservative-oriented political and economic orthodoxy at BYU, illuminate the ways Wilkinson’s own politics and religion affected his relationship with the faculty and theirs with him, and demonstrate that Wilkinson’s conservative beliefs, while reflecting the position of a majority of the Church’s leaders, were not shared by all Church members. Finally, they suggest some of the difficulties that can ensue when political questions are understood in religious terms and political orthodoxies are adopted as matters of faith.

#### **Richard D. Poll**

Born in 1918 in Salt Lake City, Richard Douglas Poll grew up in Texas and graduated twice from Texas Christian University (1938, 1939). He served an LDS proselytizing mission to Germany and later to Canada (1939–41). During World War II, he was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force. In 1943, he married Emogene (Gene) Hill (b. 1920) in the Salt Lake Temple. Five years later, in 1948, he received a Ph.D. in history from the University of California at Berkeley and joined BYU’s History Department. In

1955, he was appointed the department's chair and, four years later, was named founding president of BYU's chapter of the American Association of University Professors. In 1962, he was appointed associate director of BYU's Honors Program. During these years, he also taught classes in U.S., European, and Russian history to U.S. armed forces in Europe through the University of Maryland. Though he was an active Republican and practicing Latter-day Saint, Poll's moderate political and theological views set him apart from members like Wilkinson and eventually earned him a reputation as a liberal apostate among some Church members who took an especially conservative stance on such questions.<sup>15</sup>

*Man: His Origin and Destiny*

A few months after the publication in 1954 of Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith's *Man: His Origin and Destiny* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), Poll met with members of a loosely knit study group, called the Mormon Seminar, to discuss Smith's sometimes blistering critique of organic evolution and biblical criticism.<sup>16</sup> Smith (1876–1972) was an influential scriptural literalist and his treatise had elicited considerable discussion among supporters and critics in some quarters of the Church's educational system. Smith did not attend the seminar, but his son-in-law Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85), then a member of the First Council of the Seventy and a future apostle, did. Poll told the group that, while he believed Smith wanted to defend the faith of Church members against the use of "science to weaken or destroy testimony," he nonetheless feared that the "harsh . . . tone of [Smith's] book alienated at the outset all those who are not already in agreement with its viewpoint." Poll did not believe that Christ's divinity depended on when the continents were divided or whether death occurred on earth prior to Adam's fall. "I have no wish to upbraid those who are equally persuaded on all these points," he stated, "but I fervently hope that comparable conviction is not to be required of all Latter-day Saints in the days to come."<sup>17</sup> When word of the episode reached Wilkinson, Poll sent him an account of the seminar and copies of his correspondence with Smith.<sup>18</sup> Poll's disagreements with Wilkinson over doctrine—and their repercus-

sions—would set the stage for the later controversy involving Poll’s politics.

Hoping for a better understanding of the Church’s position on Smith’s book, Poll and wife Gene met privately with President McKay on December 29. An educator prior to his appointment as an apostle in 1906, McKay was widely seen as a broad-minded, tolerant Church official, more open to the aims and findings of science than some of his colleagues. McKay admitted that Smith’s book “has created a problem. Being written by the President of the Quorum of the Twelve, it has implications which we can appreciate. The book has not been approved by the Church; we are authorized to quote him on that,” Poll subsequently recorded.<sup>19</sup> “The work represents the opinions of one man on the Scriptures. . . . Striking the desk for emphasis, President McKay repeated that the book is not the authoritative position of the Church. . . . We do not know enough of the facts to take a definite position on evolution,” Poll quoted McKay as saying, “but the concept is certainly not incompatible with faith.”<sup>20</sup>

The Polls next spoke with Smith, who began by insisting that the “Gospel requires a literal acceptance of the Scriptures.” He acknowledged that not all of the Church’s General Authorities agreed about the origins of life on earth, that a “large number of teachers in the Church . . . do not find it possible to accept all the doctrines which [he] presents as fundamental,” and “assured” the Polls that “he did not think that they should be excommunicated or barred from teaching.” Still, in response to Poll’s belief that “the quest for truth flourishes best when the area is rather narrowly defined within which absolute truth is regarded as already known,” Smith “pointed out that insofar as he is concerned, where the Lord has spoken through the Scriptures, there is the truth.” The Polls left the one-and-a-half-hour meeting impressed that “President Smith was quite as concerned about justifying his own position as about criticizing ours. Since both sides are apparently on the defensive, we feel more optimistic about the possibility of ‘peaceful coexistence.’”<sup>21</sup>

Less than two weeks later, the Polls met with Wilkinson to review the meetings. Wilkinson, who thought that Poll was “altogether [worried] too much” about Smith’s book, told Poll that if Smith’s book should ever surface in any of his classes, “he should

give . . . both views but make it plain to the class that the acceptance of either view was not incompatible with the Gospel and that, in any event, it should be handled in such a way that the faith of the students should be built up rather than destroyed.”<sup>22</sup> Poll agreed but was annoyed that some Church members and BYU religion teachers felt licensed by Smith’s book to pass judgment on some members’ faith. “If the folks who subscribe to the literalist position will stop making an issue of it,” Poll said, “there will be no difficulty whatever with the faculty member of [a less literalistic] persuasion.” He later added that “the agitation of the subject of evolution and creation by some members of the [BYU] faculty is not helpful either to the University or to the Church. A student reported to [a colleague] that a member of the Religion faculty had made substantially this statement: ‘The fundamentalist position gives no trouble to really great scientists; it is only pip-squeaks like we have here at the ‘Y’ who cause trouble.’”<sup>23</sup> “We have no desire to be categorical, or to impose our opinions on students or others,” Poll wrote afterwards to one of Wilkinson’s aides. “But we do feel inclined to resist proposals to define the Gospel in historical and scientific terms which we find it impossible to accept.”<sup>24</sup>

Poll decided to share his views with members of his local LDS ward, over which he helped to preside as a member of the bishopric. In a sacrament meeting talk he delivered in late February 1955, Poll described differences of opinion among the Church’s hierarchy. Poll “believed that if he just explained his ideas to others, they would either agree with him or at least recognize that his ideas were understandable and his intentions were good.”<sup>25</sup> According to Joseph T. Bentley (1906–93), who headed BYU’s Accounting Department and would soon join Wilkinson’s staff, Poll told ward members that, faced with Smith’s and McKay’s views on organic evolution, members could decide that (1) one of the men was a false prophet, (2) they were mistaken in how they understood each other’s views, or (3) neither man knew enough about evolution to offer an informed opinion. Poll hoped to point out that the Church’s top officials held different views on the subject and that Church members should be afforded the same courtesy. For Bentley and some others, however, Poll’s comments created

confusion about what and whom to believe.<sup>26</sup> When later pressed about the possible side-effects of his talk, Poll reportedly admitted that “he was unwise in the statements he made, that he had no thought of belittling anyone or creating any conflict in the minds of people. He said that in the future he certainly would be constantly on his guard to say nothing that would in any way inure [sic] the faith of the ‘weakest’ of Saints.”<sup>27</sup>

Word of Poll’s attempts at conciliation eventually reached McKay. Meeting with Wilkinson and William E. Berrett (1902–93), one of Wilkinson’s vice-presidents over LDS education, McKay expressed annoyance when Berrett commented that seminary teachers were commenting about a “rift between President McKay and President Joseph Fielding Smith which could not be healed until President McKay died.” Berrett replied that he had simply been summarizing gossip among seminary teachers and had been “trying to advise them not to play up these differences.” “I know,” Wilkinson recorded, “that President Berrett never had any such thought as this [i.e., the controversy would end only with McKay’s death], but it was a very sensitive moment for Brother Berrett.” Wilkinson then read to McKay Poll’s account of his meetings with McKay and Smith as well as Bentley’s report of Poll’s sacrament meeting talk. “I tried to abbreviate my reading once or twice,” Wilkinson recalled, “but President McKay insisted I read it in detail. At the end he said he was astounded at the unwisdom of Brother Poll in making public a confidential talk which he had, first with him and then with President Smith.”<sup>28</sup> Ironically, while Poll retreated from participation in the Smith-McKay evolution controversy, McKay continued to emphasize privately and unequivocally that Smith’s belief was not official doctrine.<sup>29</sup>

#### *This Trumpet Gives an Uncertain Sound*

Poll next began to take considerable interest in advocating for faculty involvement in BYU governance as well as in responding to the political beliefs of some of the Church’s most conservative members. In February 1958, during a meeting to announce a new BYU fund-raising initiative, Poll expressed pleasure that the administration had “now embarked on a policy that salaries were to be commensurate with those of institutions of comparable size throughout the country or, in effect, that one’s loyalty or faithful-



ness to the Church should not require him to work here for less compensation than any other place.” Wilkinson dismissed Poll’s statements, which Wilkinson interpreted as references to BYU’s low faculty salaries,<sup>30</sup> as “sour” and “petty,” predicting that “we will be able to build a great institution” only if “we [do not] predicate it on” Poll’s secular-oriented “philosophy.”<sup>31</sup> Two years later, when Wilkinson reluctantly allowed the formation of a campus chapter of the American Association of University Professors, a nationwide champion of academic freedom and faculty participation in university affairs (but which Wilkinson believed was a de facto labor union), Poll was elected founding president.

In fact, as Poll became more vocal in a variety of public spheres, including joining the American Civil Liberties Union,<sup>32</sup> rumors of his possible leftist leanings began circulating among some of the school’s partisan boosters. As classes began in September 1961, McKay, who had received letters complaining about Poll, pointedly asked Wilkinson “if there were any Communists on the faculty of the Brigham Young University.” Wilkinson answered that “he was very sure that there are none.” McKay then “mentioned a report that I had received to the effect that someone in Provo had claimed that Brother Paul [i.e., Richard D. Poll], a member of the [history] faculty, is a Communist.” Wilkinson again responded that “he has been unable to get any items of any kind to prove this assertion and that he personally is satisfied that he [Poll] does not favor Communism.”<sup>33</sup>

Early the next year Poll published *This Trumpet Gives an Uncertain Sound*, a rebuttal to *The Naked Communist* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Publishing, 1958), W. Cleon Skousen’s popular anti-Communist manifesto.<sup>34</sup> Skousen (1913–2006) was a former employee of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, a BYU instructor, and the Salt Lake City police chief.<sup>35</sup> His 1958 exposé of alleged Communist inroads in American life and government helped to set the stage for his career as an influential, if divisive, political and social commentator. In 1959, McKay had endorsed Skousen’s book during October general conference. However, Poll, among others, had doubts about the accuracy of Skousen’s research and decided not to remain silent.<sup>36</sup> Skousen’s supporters rallied to his defense. Poll “is dangerous,” one man wrote, “because of his bitter vindic-



tive campaign. I shudder when I contemplate the number of students that have passed as will continue to pass under his supervision and instruction.”<sup>37</sup> “Many of our Church members are happy that they can send their children to B.Y.U. so that they won’t be indoctrinated by liberal thinkers who make it a special point to discredit anti-communists and their publications,” another man wrote. “I would prefer that they did not study under men [such as Poll].”<sup>38</sup> Others branded Poll’s booklet “vicious,” “unwarranted,” and “untruthful.”<sup>39</sup> When McKay learned of the brouhaha, he agreed with Wilkinson’s assessment that “the difficulty with Poll and others was that they could not see the forest for the trees.”<sup>40</sup> No doubt, Poll’s earlier disagreements with Joseph Fielding Smith affected McKay’s and others’ view of the present controversy. More ominously for Poll, Apostle Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994), himself a rising star in the anti-Communist ferment and a member of BYU’s Board of Trustees, told Wilkinson: “Many [BYU] students have written me personal letters regarding this man, Poll, and the adverse influence he is having among our students. There are others with similar philosophy. There is a need for a real house-cleaning. I realize that it is easier said than done, but in my judgment it must be done in the best interests of the future leadership of the Church, who are now on the campus of the B.Y.U.”<sup>41</sup>

During a two-hour meeting in January 1963, Wilkinson informed Poll that, because of his leadership in “fringe activity . . . of doubtful validity” (meaning his disagreements with Joseph Fielding Smith, his critique of Skousen’s views, and his involvement in faculty governance issues), he would not be receiving any additional administrative advancements.<sup>42</sup> Wilkinson also intimated that Poll’s days at BYU were probably numbered. Poll promised to toe a less disruptive line. But however much Poll tried, his approach to education continued to attract controversy. When he invited Dorothy Marshall, former trustee and general counsel of Loyola University, past president of the Catholic Women’s Club of Los Angeles, and former director of the Los Angeles office of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, to speak on civil rights to a small class of graduate students, her appearance provoked a minor uproar.<sup>43</sup> Critics pointed to Marshall’s service on the L.A. Citizens’ Committee to Preserve Amer-

ican Freedom and membership on the Executive Committee of the National Council of the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, which the U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities had accused of being Communist front organizations.<sup>44</sup> In the wake of the controversy, Wilkinson again told Poll that “there was little chance for his further advancement on the campus.”<sup>45</sup> Poll, his frustration mounting, wondered why Wilkinson gave credence to the complaints of “peep [sic] squeeks.” According to Wilkinson, Poll blamed Benson who, he believed, “was behind these students and had been urging them to attack Poll. He said that if Brother Benson had a case against him [the] Board [of Trustees] should know about it and if they wanted him to leave he would.” “I told him,” Wilkinson recorded, “that I was going to give them the same consideration that I was giving him and that I was not going to make any snap judgment in either case.” Poll countered that Wilkinson “should give snap judgment against them.”<sup>46</sup>

Wilkinson hoped to have an answer for Poll regarding his future at BYU before Poll left for nearly a year’s sabbatical in Europe that summer. However, as the president reviewed the situation, Wilkinson decided that he wanted help in evaluating what he termed “charges which are the basis for serious consideration as to the separating him [i.e., Poll] from the University,” and enlisted the head of BYU’s University Relations, thirty-two-year-old Stephen R. Covey (b. 1932), to make a “careful documented brief for me of the evidence to support the complaints made against Richard Poll (or disprove them).”<sup>47</sup>

*“Report on Richard D. Poll”*

After about nine months, and with Poll still abroad, Covey submitted his 54-page “Report on Richard D. Poll” in early April 1966. Covey reviewed and quoted from a variety of sources to assemble a list of seven general “charges” against Poll. During his fifteen years at BYU, Covey wrote, Poll had allegedly:

1. Pointed up disagreements between the Brethren indiscreetly in letters and public addresses in such a way as to put the Brethren in a bad light and to justify his own and other liberals’ actions [specifically Poll’s doctrinal disagreements with Joseph Fielding Smith];
2. In taking issue with W. Cleon Skousen on his book “The Na-

ked Communist”, he also took issue with President McKay who publically commended Skousen’s book on several occasions;

3. Is a member of the American Civil Liberties Union which is considered by many to be [a] Communist front organization;

4. Invited political activist Dorothy Marshall to speak on campus in 1965, in violation of University Policy. Mrs. Marshall and her husband are known affiliates with Communist front organizations;

5. Is a “liberal,” orients his classes towards “liberalism”, and is a rallying point for the “liberal” element on campus; and

6. As a member and leading officer of the B.Y.U Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Dr. Poll’s influence tends to be both constructive and critical (negative) toward the University and the policies established by the Board of Trustees.

Covey closed with a seventh, more positive, assessment: “Is a popular and effective teacher, a very intelligent and able person, and an effective leader.” Here Covey reported that a majority of Poll’s students found him to be middle-of-the-road politically and an effective, popular teacher whose classes strengthened their understanding of the “American constitutional system and the sense of civil responsibility.”<sup>48</sup> As Wilkinson finished reviewing Covey’s report on April 16, 1966, he decided that Poll was “guilty” or “probably guilty”—Wilkinson’s terms—on all counts, including Poll’s effectiveness and popularity.<sup>49</sup>

At the time, Wilkinson was also dealing with BYU’s decennial reaccreditation of its academic programs and worried what the impact would be on the school’s reaccreditation if he should not renew Poll’s teaching contract. (See also the discussion in the section on Davies, below.) Seeking guidance, he telephoned Apostle and BYU Trustee Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) the week after he received Covey’s report. According to Wilkinson, Lee “advised that I give the contract to Dick; watch him very carefully next year; that he knew he had done some ‘very stupid things,’ but that he thought that we would even have the wrath of the Accreditation Committee on us if we held it up at this time.”<sup>50</sup> The next day, Wilkinson met with Apostle and BYU Trustee Delbert L. Stapley (1896–1978) and “obtained his consent” to Poll’s reappointment as well.<sup>51</sup> According to the minutes of the BYU Board of Trustees, Wilkinson “reported that he had thoroughly investigated all of said complaints; that Brother Poll had been very indiscreet in certain matters, but is currently in Europe on sabbatical leave; and

that, in his opinion, the present termination of Brother Poll's services would not be warranted. He, therefore, stated that, unless the committee had objections, he intended to renew Brother Poll's contract but would carefully observe the latter's conduct during the coming school year." The committee voiced no objections.<sup>52</sup>

"This contract," Wilkinson informed Poll, "has been held up until I had opportunity to confer with members of the Executive Committee . . . with respect to certain complaints which have been made to them and to me over the years. We did not examine only the complaints against you, but also your reputation as a superior teacher, your overall competence and your constant willingness to work in the Church. As the result, . . . I am happy to report that I was authorized to renew your contract."<sup>53</sup> In fact, Poll received a \$700 increase over his previous year's salary, amounting to a total of \$11,900 for 1966-67.<sup>54</sup> Despite the happy resolution, complaints against Poll did not entirely disappear.<sup>55</sup> In early 1968, for example, Apostle Benson informed Wilkinson, "From reports that have come to me and, I am sure, to you also, it is my conviction that this man [Poll] should have been fired long ago."<sup>56</sup>

Poll knew that, in the face of continuing, highly placed, intractable criticism, opportunities for advancement at BYU were nonexistent; and in October 1969, he resigned to accept a vice-presidency at Western Illinois University (Macomb), joining former BYU social sciences dean John T. Bernhard (1920-2004), who had been appointed WIU president the previous year.<sup>57</sup> Also in 1969, Poll was named BYU Honors Professor of the Year. After Wilkinson's own departure in 1971, Poll sometimes sounded out vacancies at BYU, but administrators remained reluctant to provoke Church authorities. In 1975, Poll left the WIU administration to join WIU's History Department. Two years later, he taught a summer term at BYU and, after his retirement from WIU in 1983, taught history at BYU part-time to early 1994. Neither appointment required clearance from BYU's trustees. On February 15, 1994, Poll's wife, Gene, age seventy-three, died in their Provo home. Two months later, on April 27, Poll himself passed away. He had turned seventy-six four days earlier.<sup>58</sup>

### J. Kenneth Davies

The case of economist Joseph Kenneth Davies offers a further glimpse into Wilkinson's attempts to cultivate a conservative faculty at BYU, and the consequences of such attempts. Davies's affront to Wilkinson's sensibilities was around financial issues, particularly questions of salary equity at BYU. Where Poll's case exhibits a wide range of the kinds of issues that could be understood in religious terms, and enforced as matters of orthodoxy, Davies's case offers a "micro"-level view into a particular subset of Wilkinson's political and doctrinal understanding. Born in 1925 in Los Angeles, Davies joined the U.S. Navy at age seventeen in 1942. He subsequently earned a bachelor's degree in naval science from Marquette University (Milwaukee); was stationed in the Philippines, then served an additional twenty years in the Naval Reserves, retiring as a lieutenant. From 1946 to 1948, he filled an LDS proselytizing mission to New England. He married Pauline Beard Taylor (b. 1928) in 1949 in the Logan Utah Temple and earned a master's degree in economics from BYU the next year. In September 1953, he joined BYU's Economics Department; six years later, he received a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Southern California and was named an assistant professor at BYU. From 1959 to 1960, he took a nine-month leave to Durham, North Carolina, teaching at Duke University. From 1964 to 1966, he served as second president of BYU's chapter of the American Association of University Professors and, from 1966 to 1967, took a second sabbatical leave, this time to Washington, D.C., where he worked for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, first as an educational consultant, then as director of the Office of Education and Publications.<sup>59</sup>

Davies was active in Republican Party politics during his early years, describing himself: "I went so far in my opposition to communism that I supported the controversial requirement of anti-communist loyalty oaths for public servants, including teachers at public institutions."<sup>60</sup> However, during the McCarthy anti-Communist crusade of the 1950s, Davies "began to see the harm being done to the body politic by what I perceived as the extreme, unfounded, irresponsible, reputation destroying accusations being made by the Wisconsin politico and his devoted following. . . .

Their cry, that as in any 'war' the innocent might be injured or even destroyed along with the guilty, seemed wrong to me."<sup>61</sup> As a young BYU faculty member, Davies participated in a variety of political controversies: he publicly opposed the John Birch Society and McCarthyism "as extremist and harmful" to the Republican Party, the LDS Church, and America.<sup>62</sup> He soon found himself in opposition to other outspoken, politically conservative BYU faculty such as Joseph Bentley and H. Verlan Anderson (1914–92).

Davies was a vocal supporter of the United Nations, Social Security, civil rights legislation, and especially labor unionism, which he saw as a "necessary adjunct of democratic capitalism and free enterprise." He explained, "I believed that an essential component of a dynamic, fair, democratic, free-enterprise, capitalistic politico-economic system was the institution of collective bargaining between capital and labor." Davies opposed "right to work" laws, which, he believed, could "enhance employer power [such] that it could well emasculate legitimate union strength, not just controlling but destroying the ability of workers to organize and maintain unions and bargain effectively with management." At BYU, he "labored under the impression that academic freedom and vigorous discussion on secular issues, with the freedom to form and advocate my opinion, was an essential part of academic life . . . and my ideas were freely presented in my classroom and in public forums. . . . I did not consider my secular ideas as matters of religious dicta."<sup>63</sup>

*The President's "Private Political Agenda"*

By the mid-1960s, Wilkinson had decided that Davies was one of BYU's "most erratic teachers."<sup>64</sup> He based this appraisal largely on Davies's interest in and support of labor unionism and on Davies's involvement in BYU's AAUP chapter. Wilkinson viewed the AAUP as union-like and described Davies as its "ringleader."<sup>65</sup> Wilkinson saw unionism as an impediment to free enterprise and as a cousin to the false doctrine of socialism. As a member of BYU's AAUP chapter, Davies was especially interested in the equability of faculty salaries. Such information was guarded closely, since amounts sometimes reflected factors other than academic competence and performance.<sup>66</sup> "Many of us had become

convinced,” Davies recalled, “that the salary system was unfair . . . that ‘liberals’ and Wilkinson ‘enemies’ were being discriminated against as were female members of the faculty.”<sup>67</sup>

Sometime during the fall of 1965, Wells A. Grover (1931–95), one of Davies’s colleagues in the College of Business, gained access to faculty salary data, made “a computer runoff” of the material, and gave it to Davies “as a trust.”<sup>68</sup> Davies knew he had a “hot potato” and debated what to do. He decided to make a “detailed private study of the salary system,” taking a school catalog and marking next to the name of virtually every faculty member the salary he or she earned. He concluded that BYU’s salary system “was indeed unfair” and was “used by the president to promote his private political agenda.”<sup>69</sup> (For an analysis of faculty salaries, see below.) Davies shared his study with his department chair, Richard B. Wirthlin (1931–2011), and his college dean, Weldon J. Taylor (1908–2000). According to Davies, when Taylor raised the issue of salary inequities with administrators and was asked about the source of his information, he pointed to Davies. Called to meet with Wilkinson on February 17, 1966, Davies was mostly cooperative but, when pressed to reveal his source, answered that he “could not do so in good conscience.”<sup>70</sup> Wilkinson presented the matter to trustees early the next month, asking if he should “dismiss Brother Davies” and was “authorized to take such disciplinary action as he sees fit.”<sup>71</sup> Davies viewed the charge as a straw man and believed that the real reasons Wilkinson wanted him dismissed were Davies’s political beliefs and activities.

In fact, by this time, Wilkinson had decided to pursue a more focused approach to the school’s “liberal” faculty. On April 21, 1966, he delivered a politically charged speech after which a small group of conservative students recruited for that purpose reported back to the administration on the responses of select professors, including Davies.<sup>72</sup> This surveillance activity, which was publicly exposed in 1967, became known as the “1966 student spy ring.”<sup>73</sup> In arguing for Davies’s dismissal, Wilkinson used the student-generated reports on Davies, supplemented by additional material, to bolster his case—albeit without Davies’s and his colleagues’ knowledge.<sup>74</sup> Wilkinson also learned that BYU’s educational programs would be receiving a three-year provisional reaccreditation, not the standard ten-year reaccreditation, as de facto



punishment for what the outside accrediting agency judged to be an atmosphere hostile to academic freedom.<sup>75</sup> This development further cemented Wilkinson's resolve to do something about BYU's renegade faculty.<sup>76</sup>

When certain of Davies's colleagues learned that Wilkinson intended to dismiss him, they urged that if Davies were allowed to remain for another year, they would encourage him to resign voluntarily. Davies was leaving BYU for a sabbatical at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and, they felt, could be convinced to stay in Washington, D.C., or to relocate elsewhere. Wilkinson agreed on April 25, 1966, not to fire Davies, but made certain to give Davies "a stiff letter of reprimand."<sup>77</sup> "Your contract has been delayed," Wilkinson wrote on April 29, "while we were deciding what should be done in your case because of your serious infraction of the policy and rules of this institution in the following respects:

1. Your acceptance from another faculty member of confidential salary information which had been stolen from our records, making you an accessory after the fact;
2. Your communication of that information to others, and your attempted use thereof for your own purposes;
3. Your failure to assist the administration in ascertaining the perpetrator of the theft, by your refusal to disclose the source of your information, and
4. Your untruthful statements at the beginning of our investigation that you had the salaries of only a relatively small part of our faculty, when it turned out that you had copied and had in your possession practically the entire salary list.

"I trust," Wilkinson closed, "that you fully realize the seriousness of your action and that you will not hereafter violate the policy and rules of this institution. You probably also realize that this is the reason for a relatively small salary increase."<sup>78</sup>

Davies responded on May 9, objecting, first, "You have tried and convicted me of offenses without benefit of written or even oral charges at a pseudo trial at which I was not present to defend myself," and second, "Your charges are inaccurate and prejudicial." Davies reported that he could accept the following reworded statements regarding his conduct: "[Charge 1.] The acceptance from another faculty member of confidential salary in-

formation secured from University records. [Charge 2.] The communication of some of that information to one faculty member after which it was voluntarily communicated to members of the Administration. [Charge 3.] The refusal to reveal to the Administration the name of the person from whom the information was received.”

As to the fourth charge, Davies wrote:

This charge is not true. To my knowledge, I never said that I only had the salary information for a small part of the faculty. As I recall my original conversation with [Academic Vice-]President [Earl C.] Crockett he asked me how many names were on the list. I said that I did not know. I had not counted them. . . . He may have asked if I had a complete list to which I would have replied that I did not know.

As I had already shown my Department Chairman and Dean the results of my study based on all full professors as well as all ranks in two colleges, it would have been foolish to lie.

“The whole problem,” Davies concluded, “would not have arisen if we had an open, honest salary system at B.Y.U. by which a faculty member could evaluate his financial worth to the Administration by comparing his own salary with the minimum, maximum, and average for his rank.”<sup>79</sup> Davies targeted only the stated specifics of Wilkinson’s charges. Though he believed that Wilkinson’s allegations disguised his true agenda, he hoped that, if he could refute them, Wilkinson would either back down or be forced to reveal the real reasons for wanting Davies dismissed.

Davies’s chair, Wirthlin, sided with Davies and in a separate memorandum added: “He [Davies] and many others made the mistake of accepting this confidential information, but it is my opinion that your [Wilkinson’s] letter of reprimand is much too harsh considering all aspects of his case.”<sup>80</sup> Davies’s dean, Taylor, also attempted to ameliorate the situation, though his defense of Davies was somewhat more tentative than Wirthlin’s: “Frankly, since he [Davies] did bring these to me in confidence as an official in the school, I had hoped that he would not suffer unduly from this indiscretion. . . . He has been loyal in keeping the alumni in the Economics Department an active, informed, and interested group. He has a great affection for the school. He is an active member of the church and has inspired many students to

extend their efforts. . . . Nonetheless,” Taylor ended, “we are . . . advising him to seek an opportune position while he is in the East that would be more satisfactory to him and to us than his present association.”<sup>81</sup>

Wilkinson remained unpersuaded, convinced that Wirthlin and Taylor had “mis-stated certain facts” regarding the case.<sup>82</sup> Responding in mid-August to Davies’s May 9 letter, Wilkinson was adamant:

Your promise to protect the one who wrongfully took the information establishes that there had been a theft of which you were aware and, therefore, you became an accessory after the fact. . . .

. . . You admit that you made up comparative lists of salaries in your college with those in other colleges and used this as a basis for argument with your Dean that the salaries in your college should be higher. . . .

. . . Your action in agreeing to protect the identify of the one who stole the information is contrary to all concepts of good citizenship . . .

. . . The reprimand I gave you was minimal. The Board of Trustees has no obligation of any kind to make the salary list public, and as long as I am President of this Institution, I will abide by the regulations of the Board of Trustees. I object vigorously to your statement that the present salary system is not honest. . . .

. . . Were I now adjudicating this matter in the first instance, the action I would have taken would have been more severe.<sup>83</sup>

“I sincerely regret,” Davies wrote from Washington, D.C., three months later, “the conflict which appears to have developed between us. . . . I would hope that our ultimate goals are the same; namely, the development of an outstanding, scholastically respectable LDS institution of higher learning.”<sup>84</sup> “We hope you are enjoying your present position,” Wilkinson replied, noncommittally.<sup>85</sup>

A review of BYU faculty salaries for 1965–66 tends to support Davies’s salary-related concerns. Among eleven colleges, the average salaries for full professors in business (\$10,300) and social sciences (\$10,085) ranked seventh and tenth overall—behind biology and agriculture (\$10,505), education (\$10,935), family living (\$10,700), general education (\$10,500), humanities (\$10,500), and physical and engineering sciences (\$11,665). The same two colleges, across all faculty ranks (full professor to instructor),

came in fourth (social sciences, \$8,650) and eighth (business, \$8,265).<sup>86</sup> Of course, factors other than Wilkinson's disdain of what he saw as the "leftist" tendencies of some faculty members could account for the inequities. Still, Wilkinson's use of salaries to discipline individual faculty, as is clear in Davies's own situation, lends credence to Davies's contentions.

*Return to BYU*

Word that Davies was "very desirous" to return to BYU reached Wilkinson in mid-December 1966.<sup>87</sup> "My understanding," Wilkinson wrote, "is that Dean Taylor and Dr. Wirthlin practically guaranteed that Davies would not come back. If they are not going to deliver on their promise, then I think I will have to take action."<sup>88</sup> When Davies learned in early February 1967 of the administration's decision not to renew his teaching contract, he telegraphed the university that he was appealing the decision and asked for a full hearing of all charges against him.<sup>89</sup> News of the development spread; and many faculty, at BYU and elsewhere, interpreted the administration's action as an attempt to rid the school of dissent.<sup>90</sup> "My dismissal," Davies told supporters, "is the culmination of about 12 years of conflict with and discrimination by the administration."<sup>91</sup> "There was no question of political, social or economic views involved," Wilkinson countered, "and absolutely no question of free speech."<sup>92</sup>

Davies met with N. Eldon Tanner (1898–1982) of the First Presidency and Apostle Harold B. Lee on February 2 to explain the situation. Tanner believed that the dismissal was due, at least in part, to Davies's public opposition to the John Birch Society. As Davies left his office, Tanner reportedly said, "We don't want the Birch Society to get a hold on the BYU campus."<sup>93</sup> Both Davies and Wilkinson also continued to argue their case to supporters privately. Under the mounting weight of opinion, administrators informed Davies that he would be granted a hearing, but only "as a matter of grace," as school policy made no provision for such an allowance.<sup>94</sup>

Following the appointment by Wilkinson on February 21 of a three-man committee, all faculty in the College of Business, to investigate the case, administrators drafted five charges against Davies that expanded on previous allegations: (1) "Receiving and Using Stolen Property" in the form of "confidential salary infor-

mation”; (2) “Accusing Administration and Trustees” of a lack of “honesty and good faith”; (3) Stating that Wilkinson “used foul language,” “ranted and raved like a maniac and disgraced the Church,” “is mad and out of his mind,” and is a “rat”; (4) Stating that McKay’s support of “Right to Work law [is] ‘absolutely unfair’” and “that you have stated you do not believe in certain doctrines of the Church; that the Church has no right to say that Adam was the first man, or that we have a mother in heaven”; and (5) Behaving in ways that “demeaned yourself in a manner which is disloyal and offensive to the standards of the University.”<sup>95</sup> School administrators also announced that they retained final authority, regardless of the investigating committee’s recommendations.

Davies replied by taking issue with the administration’s position as both prosecutor and judge, then asked that his accusers be required to appear personally before the investigating committee. He also thought that the hearing should be open to all interested faculty and that the administration should pay for the transportation of witnesses called in his behalf. Committee members agreed that testimony would be accepted only from persons who appeared before them during the hearings but rejected Davies’s other requests.<sup>96</sup>

A few weeks before the committee was scheduled to begin, Wilkinson assured trustees that Davies would not be reemployed.<sup>97</sup> In the meantime, however, news broke of the student spy ring. Fearing the embarrassment and other repercussions that a formal hearing into Davies’s case might bring,<sup>98</sup> administrators disbanded the investigating committee and instead offered to renew Davies’s teaching contract.<sup>99</sup> “Some of the information underlying the charges made against you,” Wilkinson informed Davies, “originally came from one of the students in the [spy] group . . . [and] because of the origin of the information, I have decided to cancel your hearing [scheduled for April 1] and reinstate you as a member of the faculty. . . . I sincerely regret our differences, and I feel that they can be amicably resolved if you can accept the following commitment[:] . . .

1. There should be no comments, in or out of the classroom,

which are clearly disrespectful of the constituted authorities of the Church or University.

2. That the rules and regulations of the institution be accepted and heeded.

3. That you must not advocate views at variance with the concepts of the Restored Gospel as interpreted by the Presiding Officers of the Church.

“To show my good faith,” Wilkinson closed, “we are offering you a contract of \$10,300. This includes a salary increase that is consistent with that which members of the faculty of comparable standing received this year.”<sup>100</sup>

“I, too, regret the impasse which developed between us,” Davies replied, “but as you, I see no reason why our differences cannot be worked out. I am willing to serve under the same conditions and limitations which apply to all faculty members, interpreting them to include the degree of academic freedom we have historically enjoyed at B.Y.U.”<sup>101</sup> Sensing a possible “difference of opinion,” Wilkinson wrote back: “All of us at the BYU are to be governed by any pronouncement of the First Presidency or the President of the Church, even though they be on subjects which individuals may interpret as being beyond the scope of the Gospel.”<sup>102</sup> “I have always made every effort to be guided by the concepts and principles of the Restored Gospel,” Davies answered, “as interpreted by the presiding officers of the Church and would certainly agree with you that we should be so guided.”<sup>103</sup> “On the understanding that you are willing to abide by and follow any pronouncements by the First Presidency or the President of the Church,” Wilkinson replied, “whether they be construed as theological, political, or otherwise in nature, you are correct in assuming that you have a valid contractual agreement.”<sup>104</sup> Davies, who served during this period in a variety of local Church callings, did not press the matter further and returned to BYU that June (“with the largest increase in pay that I had received up to that point”).<sup>105</sup> An elated economics faculty celebrated the outcome.<sup>106</sup>

“Our purpose,” Davies told BYU students in 1970, “should be to widen academic freedom as far as possible, within limitations. Those limitations are dedication to the basic principles of the gospel. But the gospel allows a great breadth on social, economic, and political issues. If we destroy academic freedom, we destroy

this university.”<sup>107</sup> A little more than a decade later, Davies was appointed chair of BYU’s managerial economics department. He retired in 1987 but continued to teach part time until 1991. In 2009, after fifty-nine years of marriage, Davies’s wife, Pauline, passed away. Davies later remarried. As of this writing, he resides in Orem, Utah.

### Conclusion

Poll and Davies both tended to minimize politics and religion as factors in their sometimes stormy relationship with Wilkinson. Poll insisted instead that Wilkinson “never discovered how to relate to the faculty. . . . President Wilkinson had many strengths, but tact was not one of them.”<sup>108</sup> “If only [Wilkinson] could have understood,” he added, “that neither *employee* nor *enemy* is a synonym for *faculty*.”<sup>109</sup> Davies wondered if he was simply too “hard-headed” to get along with the equally stubborn Wilkinson. “From the hindsight of age and many years of contemplation,” Davis wrote, “I must admit that I was, in my younger years, indeed presumptuous, impudent and nervy. And I can see why Wilkinson was more than unhappy with me.” Wilkinson may have accomplished “great things,” Davies continued, but he “never understood or trusted social scientists.”<sup>110</sup>

While some of their problems may be attributable to differences of personality, temperament, and management style, such factors do not entirely account for the nature and extent of the difficulties. If the issues were other than primarily religion and politics, Wilkinson, Poll, and Davies would probably have found ways to construct a tolerable working relationship. However, Wilkinson’s attempts to foster a university-wide approach to “correct” political and economic theory, together with the carefully finessed interpretation of LDS doctrine that underpinned such theory, conflicted in important ways with Poll’s and Davies’s own strong commitments to a broader, more liberal system of belief and practice. Wilkinson’s brand of politics and religion was too rigidly structured to bear the openness and tolerance that Poll and Davies advocated with equal conviction and vigor.

Wilkinson believed that his views represented not only the beliefs of the majority of the Church’s highest authorities but, more importantly, the official positions of the Church. For Wilkinson,



to disagree with him was to disagree with prevailing Church orthodoxy. Others, like Poll and Davies, equally devout, saw things differently. On issues where, they understood, the Church had not adopted authoritative positions, they felt not only free but conscience-bound to express their own views, especially in the face of what they felt to be the beliefs of a well-intentioned, vocal, but mistaken minority of Church members. Not to speak up, they believed, was the real treason. The three men's approaches to politics and religion proved to be too divergent, the distances too unbridgeable, to support a relationship based on respect and trust. Wilkinson's, Poll's, and Davies's experiences highlight the ways such differences impacted BYU and, to some extent, the Church during the 1960s, and leave one to wonder if such tensions are a permanent feature of the LDS intellectual enterprise.

#### Notes

1. David O. McKay, "Two Contending Forces," May 18, 1960, in *BYU Miscellaneous Speeches* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1960), 5.
2. J. Reuben Clark Jr., "America Faces Freedom-Slavery Issue," September 14, 1949, *Church News*, September 25, 1949.
3. David O. McKay, "Education for Citizenship," March 8, 1954, *Church News*, March 13, 1954.
4. McKay, "Two Contending Forces," 5.
5. David O. McKay, Diary, June 3, 1954, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. "The Doctrines of Men," *Church News*, August 11, August 1962, 16. This unsigned editorial was probably written by Mark E. Petersen.
6. Stephen L. Richards, "The Charge," *The Messenger*, November 1951, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).
7. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Letter to John A. Widtsoe, August 13, 1949, Wilkinson Papers, Perry Special Collections.
8. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Letter to J. Reuben Clark Jr. and Howard D. McDonald, June 11, 1949, Wilkinson Papers.
9. See, for example, Clarence J. Karier, *Shaping the American Educational State: 1900 to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 79–91; also Lionel S. Lewis, "The Academic Axe: Some Trends in Dismissals from Institutions of Higher Learning in America," *Social Problems*, Fall 1964, 51–58; and Lionel S. Lewis and Michael N. Ryan, "In the Matter of University Governance during the 1960s," *Social Problems*, Fall 1971, 249–57.

10. This was especially true after his unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate in 1964. See Gary James Bergera, “‘A Sad and Expensive Experience’: Ernest L. Wilkinson’s 1964 Bid for the U.S. Senate,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 62 (Fall 1993): 304–24; also Bergera, “‘A Strange Phenomena’: Ernest L. Wilkinson, the LDS Church, and Utah Politics,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 (Summer 1993): 89–115.

11. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Diary, September 23, November 13, 1967, and April 14, 1966, Wilkinson Papers. For an elaboration and critique of such a belief, see Stephen C. Clark and Richard A. Van Wagoner, “Christ and the Constitution: Toward a Mormon Jurisprudence,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22 (Fall 1989): 52–64.

12. See Ernest L. Wilkinson, Memorandum to Sidney B. Sperry, October 24, 1951, Sperry Papers, Perry Special Collections.

13. Wilkinson, Diary, May 12, 1959. See also Ernest L. Wilkinson, Memorandum to Harvey L. Taylor and Wesley P. Lloyd, January 11, 1960, Wilkinson Papers.

14. See Gary James Bergera, “The 1966 BYU Student Spy Ring,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 79 (Spring 2011): 164–88.

15. See Ernest L. Wilkinson, Letter to Lucile Walker, April 27, 1965, and Ernest L. Wilkinson, Memorandum to John T. Bernhard, May 1, 1965, Wilkinson Papers; and Wilkinson, Diary, January 2, 1963. For Poll’s politics, see his critique, *This Trumpet Gives an Uncertain Sound: A Review of W. Cleon Skousen’s The Naked Communist* (March 1962), and Skousen’s rejoinder, *My Reply to Dr. Richard D. Poll and His Critique of The Naked Communist* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Publishing Co., 1962).

16. For more on the Mormon Seminar, see Thomas A. Blakely, “The Swearing Elders: The First Generation of Mormon Intellectuals,” *Sunstone* 10, no. 9 (1986): 8–13; and response by Poll, 14–17.

17. Richard D. Poll, Letter to Joseph Fielding Smith, December 3, 1954, typescript, Smith-Pettit Foundation. Smith responded: “If you had seen the number of letters and had witnessed the conversations personally and over the telephone, coming from both old and young people and many of these young people who are fed on the organic evolution theories in the schools, perhaps you would not think that the book was a tragedy so far as the young people are concerned and actually hurt their faith.” Smith, Letter to Poll, December 7, 1954, Smith-Pettit Foundation.

18. Poll, Memorandum to Wilkinson, December 15, 1954, Wilkinson Papers.

19. McKay, Diary, December 29, 1954, stressed: “The Church has not approved” of Smith’s book, that “so far as evolution is concerned, the Church has not made any ruling regarding it, and that no man has been authorized to speak for the Church on it.”

20. Richard D. Poll, "Notes of a Conversation with President David O. McKay . . .," in Poll, *History and Faith: Reflections of a Mormon Historian* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 117–18.

21. *Ibid.*, 118–20.

22. Wilkinson, Diary, January 10, 1955. When Wilkinson met a few days later with Apostle Harold B. Lee, Lee agreed, according to Wilkinson, "that, in view of the conflict of opinion on the particular doctrine as to whether there was any life before Adam, I could take no real position on the same with respect to institute and seminary teachers." *Ibid.*, January 13, 1955. Besides presiding over BYU, Wilkinson supervised the Church's seminary and Institute of Religion programs.

23. Poll, Memorandum to Wilkinson, January 31, 1955, Wilkinson Papers.

24. Poll, Memorandum to William F. Edwards, February 17, 1955, Wilkinson Papers.

25. Nanette Poll Allen, Poll's daughter, email to Bergera, November 13, 2011.

26. Bentley left three drafts of his report of Poll's comments; see also Wilkinson, "Memorandum Re: Richard Poll," March 9, 1955, Wilkinson Papers.

27. Harvey L. Taylor, "Memorandum Re: Conference With Dr. Richard Poll," April 27, 1955, attached to Stephen Covey, "Report on Richard D. Poll," April 1966, Wilkinson Papers. "It was an irresponsible act," Poll later admitted. "I have wished many times that I had just told the good brother involved [i.e., Bentley] to go to hell instead [of sharing his account of his meetings with McKay and Smith]. To what degree I don't know, but to some degree I am sure, it affected a number of people's perceptions of me. . . . It was a dumb thing that I did and it did embarrass me, in ways I'm sure I do not yet know, over the subsequent years of my life at BYU." Poll, Interviewed by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, May–June 1985, James Moyle Oral History Program, LDS Church Historical Department, 1985, 22; copy in possession of the Smith-Pettit Foundation courtesy of Nanette Poll Allen.

28. Wilkinson, Diary, June 10, 1955. Wilkinson later termed Poll's talking about his meetings with McKay and Smith an "unpardonable sin." *Ibid.*, March 10, 1960.

29. See Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 47–49.

30. See Gary James Bergera, "Building Wilkinson's University," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30 (Fall 1997): 117–20.

31. Wilkinson, Diary, February 6, 1958. Because of what he inter-

preted as Poll's misfires, specifically during the McKay-Smith controversy, Wilkinson believed that no other faculty member would have less success than Poll in representing faculty interests to trustees. See Wilkinson, Diary, March 10, 1960.

32. "I support its fundamental mission of protecting the individual rights and liberties of everyone in our country even those who are unpopular," Poll explained. Letter to Mrs. Richard L. Curts, May 7, 1965, quoted in Covey, "Report," 17.

33. McKay, Diary, September 15, 1961; emphasis McKay's.

34. Poll, *This Trumpet Gives an Uncertain Sound*, 3, critiqued Skousen's book for inadequate scholarship; mishandling his analysis of Communism; misstating history; proposing an unsound program for governmental action; extreme partisanship; and being part of an objectionable national movement. Skousen responded with *My Reply to Dr. Richard D. Poll . . .*; Poll replied with a two-page *Postscript*, which Skousen answered with a two-page *Note to the Reader*. All three items were privately published by their authors.

35. Skousen rejoined BYU's faculty in 1967, teaching religion until he retired in 1978.

36. Negative reaction to Skousen's book began surfacing by mid-1961. At an informal meeting of some faculty in Poll's home in August 1961, Wilkinson complained that Skousen, the invited speaker, "found himself the subject of serious attack." Wilkinson, Diary, August 10, 1961. By the end of the year, Poll had completed the first draft of his review of Skousen's book. Wilkinson, Diary, December 21, 22, 1961.

37. James T. Thorrup, Letter to undisclosed recipient, May 14, 1962, quoted in Covey, "Report," 10.

38. William Higgenbotham, Letter to Wilkinson, May 6, 1962, quoted in Covey, "Report," 9-10.

39. See William E. Fort Jr., Letter to Ernest L. Wilkinson, May 29, 1962, and Richard Vetterli, Letter to Ernest L. Wilkinson, June 6, 1962, quoted in Covey, "Report," 10-11.

40. Ernest L. Wilkinson, "Memorandum of a Telephone Conference Had from Washington, D.C., with President David O. McKay on Tuesday, January 9, 1962," Wilkinson Papers; see also David O. McKay, Diary, January 9, 1962. The following year, McKay said that Poll "must not tear that book [i.e., *The Naked Communist*] to pieces." McKay, Diary, July 26, 1963. Wilkinson admitted that Skousen had "a little tendency to exaggerate." Wilkinson, Diary, August 10, 1961.

41. Ezra Taft Benson, Letter to Wilkinson, March 8, 1965, quoted in Covey, "Report," 15. "I don't know how early Brother Benson decided I was a menace to the university or to the community or to the world," Poll

later said, “but during the 1960s it was apparent that he saw me as somebody who was eminently expendable, insofar as the university was concerned.” Poll, Interviewed by Beecher, 25. Benson emerged during the 1960s as the popularizer *par excellence* of the far-right wing of LDS-informed conservatism.

42. Wilkinson, Diary, January 2, 1963.

43. Some thought that BYU’s Debate Committee, of which Poll was a member, should have cleared Dorothy Marshall. However, invited speakers appearing before individual classes did not require approval. Keith Oaks, Memorandum to Wilkinson, May 3, 1965, quoted in Covey, “Report,” 19.

44. See E. Eugene Bryce, Letter, *Daily Universe*, April 21, 1965; cf. Richard D. Poll, Letter, *Daily Universe*, April 22, 1965.

45. Wilkinson, Diary, April 23, 1965.

46. Combined from Wilkinson, Diary, May 6, 1965, and Wilkinson, “Memorandum of Conference with Dick Poll,” May 6, 1965, Wilkinson Papers. Poll later recalled that, during this period, “things got most difficult, insofar as my relations with the university administration were concerned. I had been involved in several things which had caused uneasiness with President Wilkinson, partly on his own behalf but partly because at least some people [i.e., LDS Church officials] in Salt Lake were made uneasy.” Poll, Interviewed by Beecher, 25.

47. Wilkinson, Diary, July 11, July 19, 1965. Covey later became a popular motivational writer and speaker. His self-help books, including *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Free Press, 1989), have sold 20 million-plus copies in more than thirty-eight languages.

48. Covey, “Report,” 37.

49. Wilkinson, “Memo on Report of Stephen Covey on Richard Poll,” April 19, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

50. Wilkinson, Diary, April 26, 1966.

51. *Ibid.*, April 27, 1966.

52. Executive Committee, Board of Trustees, Minutes, April 28, 1966, excerpts from these minutes in possession of Smith-Pettit Foundation.

53. Wilkinson, Letter to Poll, April 25, 1966. This date was before the executive committee met, but it was “mailed May 2 due to problems in finding proper address.” Handwritten notation on retained copy, Wilkinson Papers.

54. Earl C. Crockett, Memorandum to Wilkinson, April 28, 1966, Wilkinson Papers. The average nine-month base salary for a professor for 1966–67 was \$11,200.

55. Wilkinson, Memorandum to Stephen R. Covey, October 19, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

56. Ezra Taft Benson, Letter to Wilkinson, January 30, 1968, Wilkinson Papers.

57. Board of Trustees, Minutes, October 15, 1969; also "Poll Accepts New Post as Western Illinois VP," *Daily Universe*, October 17, 1969. Poll believed that "there was no real likelihood . . . that I would be on his [i.e., Wilkinson's] team, in terms of being one of the close people. . . . He couldn't use me the way he liked to utilize people. . . . So that's why I left." Poll, Interviewed by Beecher, 22, 27.

58. Poll is probably best remembered today for his discussion of "Iron Rod" and "Liahona" Mormons in "What the Church Means to People like Me," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2 (Winter 1967): 107-17.

59. See J. Kenneth Davies, "The Saga of Joe and Lora Davies," 1997, edited by Mark Davies in 2006; and J. Kenneth Davies, "A Personal Odyssey," 1998-99. Both documents were privately circulated; photocopies in possession of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

60. Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 6.

61. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

62. *Ibid.*, 7.

63. *Ibid.*, 96, 7, 9.

64. Wilkinson, Memorandum to Stephen R. Covey, January 17, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

65. See, for example, Wilkinson, Memorandum to Weldon Taylor, July 21, 1955, and attachments, Wilkinson Papers.

66. Sharing such information, Wilkinson believed, "always results in discontent, because one faculty member objectively always thinks he's better than another." Diary, February 14, 1966.

67. Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 45-46.

68. *Ibid.*, 45. Grover graduated from BYU in 1959. He served in the U.S. Navy, worked for the Arthur Young Company (accounting), and joined the BYU faculty in 1963. In late 1965, he moved to California, subsequently worked at BYU-Hawaii, and retired in 1993.

69. *Ibid.*, 45-46.

70. Wilkinson, Diary, February 17, 1966; Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 47-48.

71. Board of Trustees, Minutes, March 2, 1966.

72. For the report on Davies, see "J. Kenneth Davies," May 24, 1966, with statements by students Lyle Burnett and Stephen Hay Russell, Wilkinson Papers. Other targeted faculty included Ray C. Hillam (political science), Richard B. Wirthlin (economics), Louis C. Midgley (politi-

cal science), Stewart L. Grow (political science), Melvin P. Mabey (political science), Jesse R. Reeder (political science), and Briant S. Jacobs (English).

73. For more, see Bergera, "The 1966 BYU Student Spy Ring."

74. See, for example, Lorenzo P. Dunn, Affidavit, July 6, 1966, notarized by Clyde D. Sandgren, Wilkinson Papers. Dunn, a member of the John Birch Society, said he had known Davies for eighteen years. See also Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 53–54.

75. John R. Howard, "Social Studies," in "Report of the Visitation Committee to the Commission on Higher Education of the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools on Brigham Young University," 96, Perry Special Collections.

76. Wilkinson, Diary, April 29, 1966.

77. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1966. That same day, Davies participated in an on-campus discussion, which Wilkinson attended, of "Political Extremism under the Spotlight" sponsored by BYU's Young Democrats and Young Republicans.

78. Wilkinson, Letter to Davies, April 29, 1966, Wilkinson Papers; see also Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 49. Davies remembered the "small salary increase" as "\$100 for the year."

79. Davies, Letter to Wilkinson, May 9, 1966, Wilkinson Papers; see also Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 49–50.

80. Richard Wirthlin, Memorandum to Ernest L. Wilkinson, May 18, 1966, Wilkinson Papers. "Instead of discharging Davies," Wilkinson later replied, "as had been suggested by one of the most respected and beloved members of the faculty, whom I consulted, . . . I merely sent him a reprimand." Wilkinson, Memorandum to Richard Wirthlin, August 20, 1966, Wilkinson Papers. "I have never condoned double standards of conduct for anyone," Wirthlin answered. "You need not lecture me on that point. . . . [I]t was somewhat encouraging to know that you had sought the advice of some unnamed 'most respected and beloved member of the faculty' and that he had recommended discharging Davies. I wish you had extended the same courtesy to Davies." Department Chairman [i.e., Wirthlin], Memorandum to Ernest L. Wilkinson, September 9, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

81. Weldon J. Taylor, Memorandum to Wilkinson, June 17, 1966, Wilkinson Papers. "A part of my concern for the manner in which Davies was dealt with," Taylor reported, "springs from my desire to preserve a climate in the college that will enable us to hold our good faculty members and attract others." Taylor, Memorandum to Wilkinson, September 13, 1966, Wilkinson Papers. "There comes a time," Wilkinson replied, "if we are going to maintain proper decorum on our campus, that I have



to take action." Wilkinson, Memorandum to Taylor, September 15, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

82. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Memorandum to Clyde D. Sandgren and Earl C. Crockett, June 28, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

83. Wilkinson, Memorandum to Davies, August 20, 1966, Wilkinson Papers. See also Clyde D. Sandgren, Memorandum to Wilkinson, July 13, 1966; and Wilkinson, Memorandum to Sandgren, July 15, 1966, both in Wilkinson Papers.

84. J. Kenneth Davies, Letter to Wilkinson, November 10, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

85. Wilkinson, Letter to Davies, November 29, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

86. Lyman J. Durfee, "Brigham Young University Average Academic Salaries-1965-66, 9-Month Contract Basis," December 22, 1965, excerpts in possession of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

87. Earl C. Crockett, Memorandum to Wilkinson, December 19, 1966, Wilkinson Papers.

88. Wilkinson, Memorandum to Crockett, December 20, 1966; also Wilkinson, Memorandum to Crockett, January 28, 1967; both in Wilkinson Papers.

89. Crockett, Letter to Davies, January 31, 1967, and Davies, Telegram to Crockett, February 6, 1967, Wilkinson Papers. See also Wilkinson, Diary, January 30, 1967.

90. More than twenty LDS academics rallied to Davies's support. Leonard J. Arrington wrote, "For Brigham Young University to dismiss a person as moderate, as balanced, and as judicious as Ken Davies, will . . . will call into question the church's devotion to higher education, to academic freedom, to the truth, and to justice." Arrington, Letter to H. Smith Broadbent, March 14, 1967, Wilkinson Papers. Broadbent served on the three-man committee to investigate Davies.

91. J. Kenneth Davies, Letter to "Dear Friend," February 10, 1967, photocopy, Smith-Pettit Foundation.

92. Ernest L. Wilkinson, "Memorandum Re: Ken Davies," February 7, 1967, Wilkinson Papers; see also Wilkinson, Diary, February 7, 1967.

93. J. Kenneth Davies, Letter to Harold B. Lee, February 20, 1967, photocopy, Smith-Pettit Foundation.

94. Earl C. Crockett, Letter to J. Kenneth Davies, February 21, 1967, Wilkinson Papers.

95. Attached to *ibid.* Davies believed that the expanded allegations were clear evidence of "the president's, at least temporary, emotional instability" occasioned, in part, by his political loss. Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 74.

96. J. Kenneth Davies, Letter to H. Smith Broadbent, Robert Smith, and Dean Peterson, February 28, 1967; and Broadbent, Letter to Davies, March 6, 1967, both in Wilkinson Papers.

97. Board of Trustees, Minutes, March 1, 1967.

98. "I now think more than ever we should avoid a hearing if possible," wrote Crockett. "I do not think it possible to separate in hearings the Davies case and the student spy ring case." Earl C. Crockett, Memorandum to Wilkinson, March 9, 1967, Wilkinson Papers. Crockett retired from BYU in 1972.

99. Wilkinson, Diary, March 10 and 11, 1967.

100. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Letter to J. Kenneth Davies, March 10, 1967, Wilkinson Papers. Davies's 1964–65 salary was \$9,533. See also Wilkinson, Memorandum, March 27, 1967, Wilkinson Papers.

101. Davies, Letter to Wilkinson, March 16, 1967, Wilkinson Papers.

102. Wilkinson, Letter to Davies, March 17, 1967, Wilkinson Papers, emphasis Wilkinson's.

103. J. Kenneth Davies, Letter to Ernest L. Wilkinson, March 21, 1967, Wilkinson Papers.

104. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Letter to J. Kenneth Davies, April 3, 1967, Wilkinson Papers.

105. Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 94.

106. See Wayne W. Clark, Memorandum to Wilkinson, March 14, 1967, Wilkinson Papers.

107. Quoted in "Drs. Davies and Ovard Co-author Econ Text," *Daily Universe*, March 23, 1970.

108. Poll, Interviewed by Beecher, 19, 20.

109. Poll, Review of *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*, by Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *BYU Studies* 26, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 91, emphasis Poll's.

110. Davies, "Personal Odyssey," 69, 104, 95, 96.