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THE BRIGHAM CITY CO-OP:
CASE STUDY
OF AN
EFFICIENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INSTITUTION

by

Stephen J. Valentine

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of the requirements for the degree

of

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HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

The leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints faced a twin dilemma in the years between 1868 to 1874. The specter of non-Mormon infiltration of society and destruction of the Mormon empire loomed menacingly on the horizon, and internal divisions and inequities threatened to destroy the religious ideals of unity and equality fostered by Mormons since the time of Joseph Smith, Jr. This twin crisis led Mormon leaders to institute church-wide economic and social programs of reform, culminating in 1874 with the establishment of the Second United Order of Enoch.

The issue explored herein is the internal dilemma of the Mormon Church: the perceived threat of inequality and division among Church members, and the subsequent attempts to institute social programs to alleviate these problems. Mormon leaders had to balance religious beliefs of unity, equality of opportunity, and self-sufficiency with economic realities of inequality, stagnant social mobility, and individual self-interest. The Church balanced these internal pressures with a socio-religious institution that enabled social control while offering substantial incentives to both self and group interests. Using Brigham City as a case study, I will attempt to show that the United Order provided an efficient institution not only for fostering religious unity, but also to balance the often competing interests of religious belief with economic self-interest.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Brigham City was settled in 1851 by William Davis and a small group of settlers, acting independently of Church direction. The community struggled for survival for the first three years, and by 1854 only six families remained. Brigham Young recognized the potential importance of the settlement as the northern outpost of the Mormon Kingdom, and in 1854 he called Lorenzo Snow, a close friend and member of the Council of Twelve Apostles, to gather several families and settle in Brigham City, and personally take charge of the religious and economic development of the community.¹ Snow, an early advocate of the need for greater community cohesion and self-sufficiency, took immediate steps to establish an unique experiment in Brigham City, starting with the organization of a cooperative general store in 1864.

The early cooperative experiment was a joint-stock company of four investors, the largest shareholder being Lorenzo Snow. Snow supervised the opening in 1864 of a general mercantile store with the stated purpose of "uniting the community for the general welfare and interest of the community."² There were several competing merchants in business at the time, but Snow, through religious persuasion, was able to convince the men to combine into a cooperative scheme of business, with each merchant selling out his goods for stock in the company. The popular sentiment for Snow and his religious-economic scheme was so great that nearly all private businesses were sold-out to Snow within five years.³

The association, named the Brigham City Mercantile and Manufacturing Company, became formally incorporated as a community-owned joint-stock company in December 1870. The stated purpose of the company, or "Co-op" as it was locally known, was to "furnish employment for those of our

settlement who wished to labor for their support, combine our interests, and become self-sustaining."⁴ In an attempt to include all members of the community in the company, the Board of Directors reduced the price of an individual share to five dollars. The stockholders elected a six member Board of Directors to manage the association, and voting was done according to the number of shares held.⁵

Lorenzo Snow designed the Co-op to achieve Brigham Young's goal of economic self-sufficiency, independence from "Gentile" traders, and greater social order through community cohesion and equality of opportunity. These ideals, which constitute the ideological basis for the Co-op, were derived from Mormon scripture and the recorded revelations of Joseph Smith Jr., the prophet of the early Church. Brigham Young, the successor of Smith, particularly stressed the concept of Mormon unity and harmony. Unity, defined in the exhortations of Mormon leaders, is the economic, religious, and social cohesion of Mormon members. Trade, farming, manufacturing, as well as religious matters, functioned properly only if individuals cooperatively assisted each other under the firm direction of Church leaders. Individuals purposely forfeited a degree of personal autonomy in order to form a more perfect "community."

Equality of opportunity, another key Mormon tenet, derived directly from the basic Mormon belief in the individual's progress toward salvation. Though unequal in this mortal life, Mormons believe that every person has equal opportunity in attaining the fullest degree of eternal salvation. Similarly, in Mormon belief, all should have equal opportunity to attain earthly honor and riches. Church sponsored economic programs, such as the Brigham

City Co-op, aimed not only to consolidate the community, but also to help the poor find greater opportunity and economic equality.

Contemporaries viewed Brigham City as an example of successful communal industry and social harmony, of particular importance to social reformers due to the labor disorders and strikes gripping the United States during this period. Brigham Young, who continually supported the operation of the Co-op, modeled his United Order in large part after the Brigham City experiment. Even when the nation and most Utah communities were hard hit by the financial depression of 1873, Brigham City experienced its period of greatest expansion and profit. The community even attracted the notice of social reformers in England who wrote that the Mormons had "created a soul under the rib of death."⁶

The United Order, initiated by Brigham Young in 1874 as a sweeping program of economic and social reform for the entire Church, created no tangible changes in the Co-op. The reorganization of the Co-op into the United Order consisted merely of changing the name and creating a 60 member United Order Council which served as an advisory board to the Co-op Board of Directors.⁷ Additionally, the United Order Council provided a religious incentive and sanction for the Co-op, and functioned as a forum for local workers to become ideologically united and directed in their labors.

In order to achieve group solidarity, the Co-op leaders maintained tight control of labor and competition. The Co-op was intended to encompass all the community, and there were even plans to locate all departments in one central location, with street cars to run from the central location to various parts of the town and the railroad station.⁸ Competition, so feared as disruptive to the Co-op plan, was non-existent until the formal renunciation

of the United Order in 1882. The absence of competition was partly due to religious motives and economic coercive control, and also due to the fact that employment in the Co-op was almost universal in Brigham City. Competing merchants found few Mormons to patronize their businesses due to the success of Lorenzo Snow's economic experiment of combining religious dogma and sanction with a community-wide economic and social institution.

ECONOMIC ORDER OF BRIGHAM CITY

The ideals of Snow had to contend with the growing inequality and depressed social mobility that citizens of Brigham City experienced by 1870. Brigham City had within twenty years reconstructed much of the social order of the "Gentile" world the early Mormon pioneers left behind. Economist Clayne Pope has argued that the unique doctrine of the Church coupled with the circumstances of exodus, migration, and settlement, should have provided an ideal and unprecedented opportunity for Mormons to construct a harmonious and equal society.⁹ Yet by 1870 this had not occurred in Brigham City, for already class divisions were forming and inequality, the foundation of disunity, was increasing.

Occupational and financial data from the 1860, 1870, and 1880 Federal censuses, as well as the earliest available tax rolls, illustrates the widening economic division developing in Brigham City during this period. The percentage of unskilled laborers in Brigham City rose from 26 percent of the labor force in 1860 to 48 percent in 1870. Mean total wealth in 1860 for farmers, the wealthiest and numerically largest occupational segment (64 percent), was \$987.00, whereas the common laborer only averaged \$342.00. By 1870 this inequity widened, as the numbers of unskilled and common labors grew and their mean real value decreased. Farmers, in 1870, only represented

34 percent of the work force, yet their averaged real value increased to \$1200.00. Unskilled laborers, now nearly half of the labor force, had fallen to \$257.00 in total mean wealth.

The total wealth controlled by the leadership of the Co-op and the 60 member United Order Council represents a further problem of upper class economic aggrandizement which plagued Brigham City, like the rest of the Nation, during this period. The six member Co-op Board of Directors, representing only 3 percent of the work force and a minuscule .05 percent of the total population, monopolized 22 percent of the total community wealth in 1870. The United Order Council members, representing a wide range of economic conditions, achieved the greatest balances. Representing 18 percent of the work force, they controlled 19 percent of the wealth. The unskilled laboring class, however, which represented nearly half of the work force (43 percent) held only 12 percent of the wealth. By 1870 the majority of Brigham City's work force was finding their real wealth decreasing, and their share of the community wealth diminishing.¹⁰

The preceding economic data underscores the idea that a real cause for social disorder existed in Brigham City in 1870. On Sunday the common Mormon laborer listened to sermons extolling unity and equality, and yet on Monday he struggled to survive while watching his Church leaders prosper. And Lorenzo Snow's Co-op exacerbated rather than ameliorated some economic problems. The Co-op, praised by later historians as providing greater economic and social opportunity for the citizens, actually served to depress opportunity for social mobility. The closed system of labor and locally controlled payment script restricted usual avenues of opportunity in independent small business, stifled the chance to accumulate cash savings, and

increased the laborer's virtual dependence on the Co-op for his livelihood and necessities.

The research by Wayne Walquist and Clayne Pope demonstrates that a remarkable degree of spatial mobility occurred in Utah between 1860 and 1880, largely because the young and poor could not find economic opportunity in their respective communities.¹¹ This pattern is confirmed in Brigham City during this period, as few laborers persisted in the community from one census to the next. Only one of 26 traceable laborers listed in the 1860 census persisted into later Brigham City records, including the 1870 and 1880 censuses, and the 1878 tax roll. The 1870 laboring group found 8 men persisting into 1880, or roughly 25 percent. The experiences of the eight laborers who persisted through the years of Co-op dominance illustrates the uncertain mobility that existed under Snow's Co-op, and the economic hardships associated with their lower-class working condition.

Jonah Mathias, 26 years old in 1870, defined himself as a "farm laborer" to the 1870 census-taker. Ten years later he listed himself simply as a "laborer". Jonah's father farmed for a living, and accumulated a modest personal wealth of \$300.00 by 1870. Jonah probably worked his father's farm, maybe with hopes of someday inheriting a small lot. By 1887 Jonah had indeed gained farm property worth \$250.00 with additional land in town worth \$100.00. He owned 3 cattle, 3 horses, and a vehicle. His total wealth in 1887 was \$450.00; a respectable sum. Jonah's Co-op stock record--representing Co-op payment for various employment--is even more impressive. By 1876 he had accumulated \$474.16, and within four years it would grow to \$735.80. Though classifying himself an unskilled laborer, Jonah found moderate improvement.

The fact that his early employment was to his propertied father seems to indicate that Jonah's mobility was less restricted.

Heber Tippets, a 24 year-old from Iowa, also listed himself as a "farm laborer" to the 1870 census-taker. His father also farmed, from whom Heber probably found employment. The year of the 1880 census recorded that Heber had been unemployed over 4 months. The problems of seasonal labor seemed to limit Heber's employment potential. By 1887, however, he had purchased or inherited one lot in Brigham City, at the outskirts of town in the sparsely inhabited Plot C. Heber's stock account grew slower than Jonah's, increasing from \$300.00 in 1876 to \$461.00 in 1881. Heber moved to Bear Lake sometime during the 1880's, a man of moderate means, though never reaching his father's level.

David Lindsey, a 24 year-old from Illinois, listed himself as a "common laborer" on 1870, with no listing of estimated wealth. The 1880 census did not list David in Brigham City, yet Co-op records and the United Order Council roll book place him in the community as late as 1877. His father worked as a farm laborer, with only \$150.00 of stated worth in 1870. This poor start most likely affected David, as did limited employment, since his stock account was only \$33.20 in 1875. The United Order Council inexplicably included David in the assemblage, and he had perfect attendance to the first five meetings. David became lost to obscurity, however, after 1877. The limited nature of his account, and the absence from further records, indicate that David likely moved in 1877. He had not found much improvement in Brigham City before leaving.

Denmark Jensen similarly participated as a member of the United Order Council, Though he listed himself as a "farm laborer" in 1870, we know by Co-

op records that he worked in the Co-op lumber mill in 1877, when a labor contention brought him to the forefront of the community's attention. Denmark's father gained prominence as a blacksmith, with a considerable personal worth of \$1200.00 in 1870. This could explain why Denmark was included in the United Order Council. Denmark's confrontation with Lorenzo Snow over the labor dispute possibly led to Denmark's voluntary removal from the community, because after the incident, no further record is found of Denmark in the community. Despite his father's prominence and wealth, Denmark did not achieve material success in Brigham City before his departure.

Neils Holst, an 18 year-old from Denmark, listed himself a "common laborer" in both the 1870 and 1880 censuses. Neils' father, a farm laborer, had accumulated only \$150.00 by 1870 and could neither read nor write. Neils achieved literacy, but his position did not improve because of it. Neils stock report listed a dismal \$8.00 in 1880, even though he resided in the community the duration of the Co-op. Recurrent unemployment and limited skills must have accounted for the small amount of retained capital.

John Halling is the best example of success among the group. Listed as a farm laborer in 1870, he achieved the classification of "farmer" in 1880. Halling's \$700.00 of total wealth placed him among the middle-class of the community. His 1878 stock of \$26.50 grew within three years to \$126.50. By 1893 he still owned stock in the failing Co-op. John's father is unknown and was not apart of the original community. The fact that John gained land to become a farmer, without his father's help, was a rare case of mobility in Brigham City.

Lars Halling--relation to John unclear--a 24 year-old from Denmark, classified himself a "common laborer" in 1870. By 1870 he had become classified as a "peddler". The change in classification did not seem to help his economic condition. By 1887 he had only \$50.00 worth of property, one cow, and one horse. His stock report, however, grew to \$130.00; larger than the more materially wealthy John Halling. The records indicate that the accumulated stock resulted from extensive labor in the community. Idleness was not part of Lars Halling's life, yet by 1887 he still only had \$100.00 in total wealth.

Davis Jenkins lived and worked as an obscure and little-known laborer. He appears in 1870 as a farm laborer, but vanishes before the 1880 census. His stock report indicates little employment. He apparently worked for the railroad, yet the extent of labor was limited. He did little work for the Co-op; his total accumulated credit was only \$7.40, the smallest of the group.

Six basic conclusions have been drawn from the data on these men. First, the opportunity for social mobility was not open to all, despite the attempts of Lorenzo Snow's Co-op--inclusion in the United Order Council did not improve the economic situation of David Lindsey or Denmark Jensen; second, employment opportunities were sometimes unavailable or undesired; third, the social status of one's father was not the deciding factor in the ultimate mobility of the son--John Halling improved economically without his father's influence, Denmark Jensen did not improve despite his father's wealth; fourth, the poor were still more likely to move elsewhere despite the incentives Snow's Co-op offered; fifth, mobility was depressed because of the payment mode of the Co-op in local script--despite frequent employment, men like Lars Halling could not accumulate liquid capital; sixth, the controlled labor

and anti-competition environment of the Co-op contributed to the decrease in mobility through reduced avenues in small business opportunities.¹²

THE CO-OP AS AN EFFICIENT INSTITUTION

The realization that mobility remained closed to some laborers persisted as a concern for Lorenzo Snow. Economic inequality and imperfect mobility realistically threatened Snow's designs for social cohesion and order in the community. Consequently, Snow took deliberate steps to ameliorate the negative effects these economic problems were causing by establishing an institution that provided positive individual religious and social incentives. Furthermore, the Co-op institution incorporated the pervasive religious ideals upon which Mormon society was built into the economic realities of every-day life.

Lorenzo Snow successfully accommodated the first religious ideal, the need for economic and religious cohesion, by creating a common labor pool unified by effective mechanisms of labor control. Instead of communal property or money, Snow utilized common labor as capital, thus distinguishing his system from the later Orderville communal experiment. Utilization of common labor--often free labor--was the cornerstone upon which the Co-op programs were built.¹³

The common labor system functioned on the basis of utilizing specialized labor under the tight direction of the Co-op leaders, with payment of any labor performed by local script, redeemable in merchandise or company stock. Seasonal workers were employed in the winter to construct buildings and factories for the Co-op, thereby receiving otherwise unavailable employment, and attaining shares of stock in the company. The Co-op gained valuable buildings, such as a \$10,000 tannery, at basically no cost since payment in

stock did not appreciably diminish the company capital.¹⁴ This system of common labor allowed the Co-op to quickly accumulate capital that was reinvested in new industries. This efficient system consequently increased production from \$60,000 in 1873 to \$260,000 in 1875.¹⁵

The payment mode of the Co-op was perhaps the most ingenious method of achieving unity, gaining capital, and increasing the common labor pool by means of increased employee dependence on the Co-op. Payment made in local Home-D script, worthless outside Brigham City, meant that an employee was dependent on the Co-op, not only to purchase merchandise, but because an accumulation of cash savings was impossible. Payment in company stock presented an even greater dilemma and created a sort of reverse individual-to-company debt dependence. A gradual accumulation of company stock through labor created a credit and investment for the employee--an investment, or "stake in society" that would be lost if the laborer left the community or ceased to work for the Co-op. Indeed, one could say that an employee could not quit because the Co-op was in debt to him.

Lorenzo Snow also brought the labor force into conformity through an effective appeal to religious sentiment by the United Order Council. Feramorz Fox, early Co-op historian, noted that the United Order Council was the most effective means of instilling religious sentiment for Snow's economic plan because it created a framework by which people were brought "into conformity with the Church-wide plan and wishes of President Young."¹⁶ The Council became the indoctrinating mechanism, solidifying support and reinforcing the extolled belief that the economic programs of the Co-op were in fact religiously motivated, and should be followed with pietistic zeal.

The United Order Council consisted of religious and economic leaders of the community who gathered primarily to advise the Co-op Board of Directors and "reinforce their devotion to the higher goals."¹⁷ The Council included each Co-op department supervisor, the Board of Directors, the wealthy and influential individuals and Church leaders, as well as a representative collection of laborers from each department. The Council became a forum for town discussion and reinforced religious ideals. Constant reinforcement and group planning provided excellent control among the department leaders who then transmitted their indoctrination down to the common laborers. Through the Council, the laborer learned what was expected of him religiously, what role he played temporally, and how he was serving to build the Kingdom of God.

Another means of controlling labor was the classification and specialization of labor into various departments. By 1874 approximately 40 departments divided the economy into specialized trades and factories, covering almost every phase of agriculture or manufacture. The departments included such diverse enterprises as a dairy, hattery, broom factory, and silk department.¹⁸ These departments furnished all the goods and services for the community and provided the opportunity for employment for all the citizens of Brigham City. By 1870 the opening and closing of the Co-op departments, signified by a single courthouse bell, regulated the work-forces of the entire community.¹⁹

In addition to promoting greater efficiency in the economy, the classification system also reduced competition by incorporating former competitive merchants into positions in a Co-op department. For example, Morris Rosenbaum, a prominent merchant before the Co-op monopolization, was

invited to manage the Co-op Mercantile store instead of his own store, thereby removing his potential economic competition.²⁰ Lorenzo Snow would later recall that a major design in achieving unity had been "by classifying and assigning them severally to such departments of industry as would best promote individual and general interest and of the building up the Kingdom of God."²¹

There was also a "down and dirty" side to controlling labor in Brigham City; the coercive or "forced unity" control by Co-op leaders. Co-op leaders would not countenance any competition or opposition to the Co-op, and took strident steps to eliminate and control opposing labor. The United Order Minutes from the period illustrate the leaders' views on the matter:

It was moved and carried unanimously that the council disapprove, discountenance, and disfellowship all persons who would start an opposition store or assist to erect a building for that purpose.²²

From the Church pulpit, the Co-op leaders frequently instructed the citizens not to trade or fellowship any opposing merchants. According to one contemporary, active involvement in the Order was an indication of religious fidelity, and any who labored outside the Order were socially and religiously suspect.²³ Any who would countenance opposition, especially the strictly forbidden trade with Corinne, a neighboring "Gentile" city, was liable to be investigated by committees appointed to deal with backsliding members. The committees could recommend suspension from the quorum of the priesthood or excommunication from the Church.²⁴ To assist in this process, and in case the admonitions of the spirit were not enough, Co-op leaders stationed faithful members at rival competitors' doors to record the names of all persons who traded therein.²⁵

A veritable crisis occurred in the community over the conduct of Morris D. Rosenbaum, one of the wealthiest inhabitants and a former merchant. The crisis served to illustrate not only the tenuous hold of the Co-op on the ambitions of businessmen, but also the tenacity and strength of Co-op control of labor. Upon opening a rival mercantile store in the face of stiff economic and religious resistance from the community, Rosenbaum asked President Brigham Young to address his grievances and allow his competition in Brigham City. Young instead wrote a letter to the United Order Council, directing them to reincorporate Rosenbaum in the Order and make him general manager of the Co-op mercantile store. The Co-op directors were incensed and refused to allow Rosenbaum this position. A delegation immediately departed to explain to President Young the situation and the Board's stand on competition. Meanwhile, the leaders instructed members not to countenance Rosenbaum in any way in order to force him out of business.

The plot thickened over the next few days as the community learned that Rosenbaum was accompanied in business by none other than Robert Fishburn, the highly respected music director of the community. Furthermore, Rosenbaum began circulating that he had previously counseled with Lorenzo Snow about opening his rival store, and that Snow himself gave Rosenbaum his blessing. Community members were both absorbed and distressed by the proceedings, and Snow immediately condemned Rosenbaum, denied any previous involvement, and refused conciliation. The Directors agreed that conciliation was impossible, and accordingly John D. Reese accepted the assignment to speak with Rosenbaum. Reese later related that he found Rosenbaum possessed of a "very bitter and wicked spirit, opposing the authority and counsel here." Neither side was willing to be reconciled.

Still awaiting word from President Young, the Directors called a special emergency session of the United Order Council in order to confront Rosenbaum. After two hours of tumult and tirade by both sides, Fishburn rose and denied any dishonest dealings, instead proclaiming that Rosenbaum had in fact deceived him by proclaiming that Snow had blessed the rival operation. Begging for redress, Fishburn abandoned Rosenbaum and rejoined the Order in good standing. Rosenbaum remained adamant in opposition, and the Council adjourned without taking action.

Two days later the Co-op leaders called another meeting, again without word from Young. Although the details of the meeting are unknown, it was clear that the conflicting sides reached an agreement, for Rosenbaum immediately closed shop and repaid the money lent him. The existence of the abortive rival business, and all the controversy surrounding it, had only lasted only two weeks.²⁶ The controversy surrounding the issue, however, illustrates the power the Order had to control labor, as well as the competing desires of some individuals in the community. Unity was achieved, but individual ambitions were still seething, just below the surface.

The process of direct control succeeded in protecting the Co-op from external economic completion, but there were also internal threats of labor problems that had to be resolved. The Council minutes illustrate the increasing emphasis placed on internal labor control. Lorenzo Snow stated on one occasion that there needed to be more than a tacit understanding about the obligation for laborers to remain at work. Instead, Snow wanted a strong understanding that would bind the laborer to his department.²⁷ The Council even considered retaining a portion of the worker's wages until the expiration of his labor contract as means of increasing firm labor control.²⁸ The Council

also concurred that "no person should have work without first getting the sanction of the general Council of the United Order."²⁹ Obviously this requirement would increase Council control over the employment of each individual in the community.

One distraught department supervisor addressed the Council on the question of how best to control and govern his laborers, and to get the most work out of them. Brother Reese answered that "it is the duty of superintendents to keep order in their departments," while Brother Tingey counselled that he corrected laborers "privately and kindly; if that failed he gave them their time and quit." Lorenzo Snow authoritatively answered that "the foundation of success lay through example and through being prompt to correct every fault in negligence by the employee."³⁰

The issue of labor control was best exemplified in the case of Denmark Jensen and Christian Olsen, two common laborers in the Co-op lumber mills. Lorenzo Snow opened the 15 July 1877 Council meeting by speaking on the mutual obligation between the Co-op and its employees, and then proceeded to relate the case of Jensen and Olsen. Apparently both men had left the lumber mill without permission to return to Brigham City, and were now excluded from work within the Co-op. The council summoned both men that day heard their defense. Olsen apologized for his rash actions, stated that he now saw the error of his ways, and wished to return work. Denmark also wished to return to work, yet stated he would not apologize, for he saw no error in what he had done. Snow replied that he need not apologize as long as he returned to work and paid the department the losses in labor incurred by his departure. Denmark reluctantly accepted the judgment.³¹

Some workers, like Christian Olsen, would not question the authority of the Co-op leadership in their direction of labor. Others, like Denmark Jensen, questioned it, yet found no better alternative to resisting. The majority of workers, however, remained in the Co-op not simply because of the labor controls, or lack of better alternatives, but because the Co-op offered real individual incentives. The Co-op achieved unity through labor control, and it achieved social order and religious and social (if not economic) equality--the other pressing Mormon beliefs--through its effective use of providing incentives.

PROVIDING INCENTIVES

The most obvious incentive for a Brigham City resident of 1870 was the sense of faithful fulfillment of religious duty by participation in the Co-op. Religion remained the core of community life in Brigham City during the 1870s; most individuals ordered their lives according to the dictates of their religion. Contemporary accounts repeatedly emphasize that religion, rather than economic profit or labor control, was the motivator that kept them in the Co-op. Individual accounts abound about great personal and financial sacrifice made in the name of religious devotion to the Co-op and the revered authority of Lorenzo Snow.

Joseph Smith Hamson, for example, was "called" by Lorenzo Snow to fulfill a Co-op work mission hundreds of miles away in Southern Utah. Although distraught at the prospect of leaving his family, Hamson accepted the call as a matter of religious duty. The Co-op work camp spent two years cultivating cotton and producing warp for the Co-op Woolen Mill. The two years were fraught with hardship, as illness and fevers continually weakened the camp. Hamson returned to Brigham City in 1877, and was again called by

Snow to work for the Co-op, this time at the Twin Saw and Shingle Mills. Tragedy struck Hamson soon after when his leg was caught in a saw belt and mangled so badly that it had to be amputated below the knee.³²

The hardship associated with the work callings, however, did not keep laborers from accepting work assignments. Charles F. Nelson, for example, related his feelings about being called by Snow to tend the Co-op sheep herd in Hogup, a remote location in northwest Box Elder County. Although the assignment meant hardship and temporary absence from his family, Nelson faithfully responded to the call because "Lorenzo Snow stated, 'If you go, I will call it a mission'." Nelson felt that he could not refuse such a mission call from his Church leader.³³

In addition to religious compulsion, the poor laborer also found incentive in the Co-op by the many programs instituted to alleviate his condition, and by the acceptance, rather than rejection, of the poor by the community. Lorenzo Snow related that a good portion of the valuable bread stuffs had been given to the poor each year, though this deprived the Co-op of a valuable commodity since wheat was traded as a cash article.³⁴ Many prominent men took the poor into their homes, as suggested by President Snow. Bishop Alvin Nichols alone supported eleven poor individuals, including three Indians.³⁵ In all, over 50 people received support from the more wealthy households in 1870, representing a serious effort to alleviate the condition of the poor or disabled.

Lorenzo Snow also oversaw the establishment of an unique "tramp department," with the stated aim of assisting the poor vagrants that drifted through the community. The department hired the "tramps" who arrived off the local railroad, as well as the general unemployed from Brigham City and

the neighboring communities. The department hired the poor as day-laborers and paid subsistence wages for their labor. The tramp department succeeded beyond all expectation, even reporting a profit of \$950.00 in 1877.³⁵

All laborers enjoyed the incentive of universal employment offered by the Co-op. Contemporaries described Brigham City as a "hive of industry" where no man need be unemployed or impoverished. Indeed, Brigham City was described as not having a "loafer, or an idle man, boy, woman, or girl; industry, prosperity and contentment seemed to characterize the entire community."³⁷ The use of a common labor pool utilized unemployed masons or carpenters to construct community buildings, it incorporated "tramps" and the poor into a specific department with specified labor available, it even utilized the Indians of the community by establishing an "Indian Farm" where Indians could learn agriculture and become self-supporting.³⁸

The Co-op and United Order Council actively participated in the improvement of community life. The United Order Council oversaw the construction of homes for desirous members, and made improvements or additions to member's property without charge. It became the guardians and benefactors of widowed wives and children, it helped pay for Mormon missions for individuals so called, and it labored to care for the sick and afflicted, so their illness would not mean loss of income for the family.³⁹ Bishop Alvin Nichols stated that the Co-op had supported and employed "many people, some of whom are in delicate health or crippled, who under other circumstances would be utterly unable to earn their living."⁴⁰ Lorenzo Snow also provided many social and cultural incentives to those who labored in his Co-op. The Co-op leaders supported the first community schools, helped pay the salaries of the teachers, and provided text books for students.⁴¹ Most Co-op

departments additionally hired young men as apprentices and taught them skilled crafts or trades, giving the youth of the community training and employment they otherwise would not have received.⁴²

Snow actively promoted cultural activities such as music and drama, for the benefit and betterment of the community. The Brigham City Dramatic Association was founded in 1863 under the guidance of Lorenzo Snow. The association began presenting plays for the community in Snow's home, but soon expanded into the County Court House as the popularity increased.⁴³ Snow cultivated the music of the community by hiring Robert Fishburn from Smithfield to relocate in Brigham City and serve as Music Director of the local choir.⁴⁴ A community dance hall was constructed by the Co-op, and several Co-op members served as musicians for weekly dances. Snow also organized a "polysophical society" and a debating society, for the cultural and educational improvement of the society.⁴⁵ The admission to all social and cultural events was paid for with the local Home-D script. The cultural events were intended for the benefit of the Co-op members, and served as another incentive for community members to enter into the Order.

The skilled craftsmen and prosperous businessmen also found incentives in the Co-op. Ola N. Stohl, for example, operated a successful tailor shop independently in 1866, yet encountered economic competition from other tailors in town. The incorporation of the Co-op combined all the community tailors into one department, and in 1874 President Snow invited Stohl to become superintendent of the department. Stohl benefitted economically from the reduced competition, and received higher pay as a superintendent than he had as a tailor. The department functioned cohesively until 1879, when Stohl was called on a Church mission and the department dissolved.⁴⁶

Some craftsman, such as Chester Southworth Sr., received direct economic benefit and incentive from the Co-op programs. Southworth opened an independent tannery in 1857 in a small adobe shop.⁴⁷ Lorenzo Snow's extensive vision for the Co-op translated into an expansion of Southworth's small tannery into a large, modern factory. The construction and equipment were entirely furnished by company capital, the total expenditures exceeding \$10,000.00.⁴⁸ Southworth managed the factory for the Co-op for several years, enjoying far greater productive capacity and labor supply than conceivable in his small adobe shop.

The common laborer benefitted from the Co-op by employment opportunity, the poor received financial and educational assistance, and even the wealthy found incentive, either through religious ideals or economic gains. A final incentive existed, however, and one close to the heart and desires of Lorenzo Snow. The Brigham City Co-op functioned most efficiently as a shelter and haven for Mormons seeking independence from the "Gentile" world, and as an impediment to the increasing "Americanization" of Mormon society. Lorenzo Snow, writing in the last entry of the United Order Minutes, reexamined the accomplishments and failures of the Co-op as follows:

Because of many losses and disasters . . . we have discontinued some of our enterprises and curtailed others. Yet for a period of fifteen years, our union has prevented division in mercantile business; say nothing about many other things which have been done by our union, and I have nothing to regret of all we have accomplished. We have kept out our enemies, and in all these matters we did them by common consent.⁴⁹

ASSESSMENT

The Brigham City Co-op and United Order efficiently balanced religious beliefs of unity and equality with the competing pressures of economic inequality and social disorder. This equilibrium was achieved by the

implementation of successful social controls than enabled group cohesion while offering economic, social, and religious incentives. The real achievement of the Co-op leaders, therefore, resides not in any material gain, but in the social union and order resulting from an equitable balance of religion and economics. The equitable combination of Church and State created a successful experiment that gained the admiration of social reformers throughout the world, and provided tangible improvements in the economic, social, and religious lives of Brigham City residents.

APPENDIX I

BRIGHAM CITY 1860: OCCUPATION AND MEAN TOTAL WEALTH

Primary Occupation	Number in Sample	Mean Wealth
carpenter	5	\$ 467
shoemaker	3	376
blacksmith	3	1366
cooper	2	590
painter	1	700
potter	1	650
wheelwright	1	500

Unskilled Occupations	Number in Sample	Mean Wealth
farm laborer	2	500
common laborer	37	342
factory operative	3	125

Source: 1860 Federal Census Records

Note: Average wealth of farmers did not include Lorenzo Snow's estimate of \$11,600 or Abraham Hunsaker's \$5,700. The statistical sample only included household heads listing an estimated total personal wealth.

APPENDIX II

BRIGHAM CITY 1870: OCCUPATION AND MEAN TOTAL WEALTH

Primary Occupation	Number in Sample	Mean Wealth
farmer	67	\$ 1200

Skilled Occupations	Number in Sample	Mean Wealth
carpenter	20	\$ 548
shoemaker	3	553
blacksmith	10	625
tailor	3	620
cabinet maker	3	850
clerk	3	620
plasterer	1	700
mason	2	600
painter	1	400
tannery-skilled	2	450
saw mill-skilled	1	850
grist mill-skilled	2	775
butcher	2	525

Unskilled Occupations	Number in Sample	Mean Wealth
farm laborer	29	\$ 447
common laborer	16	170
carding mill-unskilled	1	300
shoe shop-unskilled	2	116
keeping house	47	251

Source: 1870 Federal Census Records

Note: Sample compiled without Lorenzo Snow's estimated \$14,000. The common laborer average cited in the narrative is an average of the five unskilled occupations listed.

APPENDIX III

COMPARATIVE CHART OF BRIGHAM CITY AND ESSEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS

Skilled Occupations	B.C. 1870	Essex 1875
carpenter	\$ 548	\$534
shoemaker	553	521
blacksmith	625	568
mason	600	524
painter	400	475

Unskilled Occuaptions	B.C. 1870:	Essex 1875
common laborer	\$309	\$359

Source: Brigham City: 1870 Federal Census Records

Essex County: Stephen Thernstrom, Poverty and Progress, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.

Note: All figures are averages.

APPENDIX IV

AGGRANDIZEMENT OF WEALTH IN BRIGHAM CITY, 1870

Classification	% Total Wealth	% Household Heads	% Total Population
Board of Directors	22%	3%	.05%
UO Council	19%	18%	2.5%
Remaining Skilled Lab.	40%	30%	4.0%
Laborers	12%	43%	6.0%

Source: 1870 Federal Census Records

Brigham City Co-op Records, LDS Church Archives, S.L.C., UT.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Leonard J. Arrington, "Cooperative Community in the North," Utah Historical Quarterly 33 (Summer, 1965) 200
- (2) Leonard J. Arrington, Building the City of God: Community and Cooperation Among the Mormons (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1976) 112.
- (3) *Ibid.*, 113
- (4) William Watkins to Gates, undated letter in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Archives, Salt Lake City, UT., Brigham City Mercantile and Manufacturing Collection. See also Mark Riddle, "Lorenzo Snow and the Brigham City Cooperative," (Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1978) 5.
- (5) *Ibid.*, Watkins letter.
- (6) Arrington, "Cooperative Community," 211.
- (7) Arrington, Building the Kingdom of God, 121.
- (8) *Ibid.*, 116
- (9) Clayne L. Pope, "Households on the American Frontier: the Distribution of Income and Wealth in Utah, 1850-1900." In Markets in History: Studies of the Past, ed. David W. Galenson. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 160-161.
- (10) Statistics are from the 1860, 1870, 1880 U.S. Manuscript Censuses, and Brigham City Tax Assessors Rolls, 1878, Utah State Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- (11) Pope, "Households on the American Frontier," 183-185. Also Wayne L. Wahlquist, "Settlement Process in the Mormon Core Area, 1847-1890," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1974) 224.
- (12) Compiled from 1860, 1870, and 1880 Federal Manuscript Censuses and 1887 Tax Assessors Rolls, Utah State Archives; Brigham City Co-op Stock Reports and United Order Roll Book, account books in the Brigham City Mercantile and Manufacturing Association collection 1865-1895, LDS Church Archives, S.L.C., UT.
- (13) Feramorz Y. Fox, "Experiments in Cooperation," (typescript, LDS Church Archives, S.L.C. UT.), 14.
- (14) Arrington, Building the Kingdom of God, 113.
- (15) Riddle, "The Brigham City Co-op," 8-9.
- (16) Fox, "Experiments in Cooperation," 25.

- (17) Arrington, Building the Kingdom of God, 122.
- (18) Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968) 325.
- (19) Arrington, Building the Kingdom of God, 117.
- (20) Brigham City Co-op Board of Directors Minutes, November 4, 1872. An account book in the Brigham City Mercantile and Manufacturing Association records 1865-1895, LDS Church Archives, S.L.C., UT.
- (21) Arrington, "Cooperative Community," 213.
- (22) Ibid., 206.
- (23) Burt A. Horsely "Oh Pshaw and Confound It: Reminiscences of a Mormon Patriarch". Typescript, Brigham City Community Library, Brigham City, UT., 4.
- (24) Ibid.
- (25) Arrington, "Cooperative Community," 206.
- (26) Journal of Robert Leeming Fishburn. Manuscript compiled by Alice K. Slasser. Reprinted in Daughters of Utah Pioneers Lessons (Salt Lake City: 1991), in the Utah State University Special Collections, 226-227. Also Brigham City Directors Minutes, November 4 and November 26, 1872, LDS Church Archives, S.L.C., UT.
- (27) Brigham City United Order Minutes, February 20, 1875. An account book in the extensive Brigham City Mercantile and Manufacturing Association records 1865-1895, LDS Church Archives, S.L.C., UT.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Ibid., February 12, 1877.
- (31) Ibid., July 15, 1877.
- (32) Joseph Smith Hamson. Typescript, Daughters of Utah Pioneers Histories, Brigham City Community Museum, Brigham City, UT., 1.
- (33) Biographical Sketch of Charles Fredrick Nelson. Typescript, D.U.P. Histories, Brigham City Community Museum, Brigham City, UT., 2.
- (34) Arrington, "Cooperative Community," 213.
- (35) 1870 Federal Manuscript Census.

- (36) Riddle, "Brigham City Co-op," 21.
- (37) Arrington, Building the Kingdom of God, 123.
- (38) Arrington, "Cooperative Community," 204
- (39) Ibid., 208
- (40) Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, April 20, 1874. LDS Church Archives, S.L.C., UT.
- (41) Short History of the Co-op, An account book by Lorenzo Snow in the Brigham City Mercantile and Manufacturing Records 1865-1895, page n.n. LDS Church Archives. See also Riddle, "Brigham City Co-op," 21.
- (42) Riddle, "Brigham City Co-op," 21.
- (43) History of Box Elder County n.a.(Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1937), Brigham City Community Library, Brigham City, UT., 66.
- (44) Robert Leeming Fishburn, 214.
- (45) History of Box Elder County, 188.
- (46) Ibid., 78-79.
- (47) Ibid., 81-82.
- (48) Arrington, Building the Kingdom of God, 113.
- (49) Brigham City United Order Minutes, July 20, 1880.

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