

President David O. McKay:

We will now hear from Elder Ezra

Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Sterling W. Sill.

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My beloved brethren and sisters and friends, humbly and gratefully I stand before you in response to the call of him whom we sustain as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and President of the Church. With all my heart I endorse and rejoice in the counsel received at this conference.

About a month ago our beloved leader, President David O. McKay, delivered an inspiring prayer at the dedication of the London Temple.

As an introduction to what I trust the Lord will be pleased to have me say today, I quote a short paragraph from that memorable prayer:

"Next to life, we express gratitude for the gift of free agency. When thou didst create man, thou placed within him part of thine Omnipotence and bade him choose for himself. Liberty and conscience thus became a sacred part of human nature. Freedom not only to think, but to speak and act, is a God-given privilege."

Our heritage of freedom is as precious as life itself. It is truly a God-given gift to man. Since the time of the council in heaven, the fight of liberty-loving people for freedom has continued.

Free agency is an eternal principle vouchsafed to us in the perfect law of liberty—the gospel of Jesus Christ. Freedom of choice is more to be treasured than any earthly possession. It is guaranteed in our heaven-inspired Constitution. Yes, freedom is an inherited, inalienable, divine gift to men.

When the Savior of mankind wished to impress on his hearers the fruits of his teaching, he used these words: ". . . the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.)

We are moral agents with freedom to choose between right and wrong.

Past material advances have been the fruit of our freedom—our free enterprise system—our American way of life—our God-given freedom of choice. The

progress of the future must stem from this same basic freedom.

Because our forefathers fought for the ideal of freedom; because our fathers preserved that ideal through our free enterprise system under our God-given free agency; because they were willing to make religion the vital force of daily living, all of us have climbed through the years to new heights of well-being and inner strength.

But it is not only in the moral choice of right and wrong that man is free. Among the relentless quests of human history, is the quest for political freedom. When Patrick Henry shouted his immortal "Give me liberty or give me death," he did not speak idly. When at Philadelphia in 1776, the signers of the Declaration of Independence affixed their signatures to that sacred document, they, in a very real sense, were choosing liberty or death. Not one of them but knew full well that if the revolution failed, if the fight for freedom should come to naught, they would be branded as rebels and hanged as traitors.

The inspired founding fathers formulated a system of government with checks and balances protecting the freedom of the people. But even this was not enough. The first order of the new congress was to draw up a Bill of Rights—ten amendments guaranteeing for all time the fundamental freedoms that the American people insist are theirs by the will of God, not by the will of government.

Yes, the founders of this nation bequeathed to us a heritage of freedom and unity that is our most priceless political possession.

But to be enjoyed, freedom must be won continually. The major responsibility of government is to guard the lives and safeguard the freedom of its citizens. Yet even in the operation of govern-

ment—especially big government—there are real dangers to our freedom.

Today the scope and variety of governmental operations have become amazingly wide. We are touched by government from before we are born until after we die. Government impinges on our lives every hour of the day and night.

Most of these governmental activities are helpful in greater or lesser degree, of course. But we must face the central problem of just how much of our lives, of our freedom, of our economy, and of our society, we want to entrust to government.

And we must face the further fact of just what division of functions we want to make between Washington and our state capitals. We must be aware of the price we pay when we place more and more of our lives in the hands of centralized government.

It is high time we awakened to the dangers of excessive government in business and in agriculture. It is time we realized the perils of too great a centralization of power, and too much dependence on public agencies.

We have seen in the past quarter century a tremendous shift from individual to governmental responsibility in many phases of economic and social life. We have seen a rapid shift of responsibility from the states to the federal government.

The magnitude of these changes is revealed by a few simple figures. Twenty-five years ago the federal government received one-fourth of all the taxes collected in the United States. Today the federal government—in spite of the biggest tax cut in history of \$7,400,000,000 (7.4 percent) in 1954—collects not one fourth but three-fourths of all our taxes. Twenty-five years ago all taxes, federal, state and local, took 14 percent of our national income. Today taxes take 31 percent.

I recognize that there have been reasons for doing more things through government, and for doing them from Washington. Fighting first a prolonged depression and then a war, unavoidably shifted responsibility to the federal government. The shrinking of time and distance and the growing interdependence of our economic lives have all con-

tributed to a centralization of authority at the national capital.

Yet, deep in their hearts, the American people instinctively know that great concentration of power is an evil and a dangerous thing. They do not need to have it proved.

What lies behind this conviction? Basically, it is an intuitive knowledge that, sooner or later, the accumulation of power in a central government leads to a loss of freedom. Once power is concentrated, even for helpful purposes, it is all there, in one package, where it can be grabbed by those who may not be helpful in its use.

If power is diffused, this cannot happen. This is why the founders of our country carefully divided power between the state and federal levels. Nothing has happened in the meantime to call in question the validity of this arrangement.

Our traditional federal-state relationship, we must never forget, starts with a general presumption in favor of state and individual rights. Under the constitutional concept, powers not granted to the federal government are reserved to the states or to the people.

Many forces work toward the concentration of power at federal level. It somehow seems easier to impose so-called "progress" on localities than to wait for them to bring it about themselves. Raids on the federal treasury can be all too readily accomplished by an organized few over the feeble protests of any apathetic majority. With more and more activity centered in the federal government, the relationship between the costs and the benefits of government programs becomes obscure. What follows is the voting of public money without having to accept direct local responsibility for higher taxes.

If this trend continues, the states may be left hollow shells, operating primarily as the field districts of federal departments and dependent upon the federal treasury for their support.

It has been truly said by our present Chief Executive that, "The federal government did not create the states of this Republic. The states created the federal government . . . —if the states lose their meaning our entire system of government loses its meaning and the next

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step is the rise of the centralized national state in which the seeds of autocracy can take root and grow."

Those are strong but true words.

The history of all mankind shows very clearly that if we would be free—and if we would stay free—we must stand eternal watch against the accumulation of too much power in government.

There is hardly a single instance in all of history where the dictatorial centralization of power has been compatible with individual freedoms—where it has not reduced the citizenry to the status of pawns and mere creatures of the state. God forbid that this should happen in America. Yet I am persuaded that the continuation of the trend of the past twenty-five years could make us pallbearers at the burial of the states as effective units of government.

The drift toward centralization of power is not inevitable. It can be slowed down, halted, reversed.

How? By state and local governments insisting that theirs is the responsibility for problems that are essentially local and state problems—insisting upon this, with the knowledge that responsibility and authority go hand in hand.

Inevitably, in centralized federal programs the money is not as wisely spent as if the states participated financially.

The people come to look to the federal government as the provider, at no cost to them, of whatever is needful.

The truth is that the federal government has no funds which it does not first, in some manner, take from the people. A dollar cannot make the round trip to Washington and back without shrinking in the process. As taxpayers we need to recognize these facts; programs which obscure them are contrary to public interest.

The thought that the federal government is wealthy and the states poverty-stricken is a dangerous illusion. The federal debt is now eight times as great as the combined debt of the forty-eight states. It is difficult for the states to make a strong case for assistance from the federal government when anything the federal government spends must come from the states.

The states not only have rights, they

also have responsibilities, and they have opportunities.

In the last analysis, we are not trying to protect one government entity from another. We are trying to protect the rights of individual people. If we ever forget this, the whole process of government is pointless.

George Washington said: "Government is not reason, it is not eloquence—it is force! Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master!"

"It is hardly lack of due process," said the Supreme Court, "for the government to regulate that which it subsidizes." But we must remember as President Clark has counseled us that a planned and subsidized economy weakens initiative, discourages industry, destroys character, and demoralizes the people.

Our people must remain free. Our economy must remain free—free of excessive government paternalism, regimentation, and control.

As a nation, we are strong. With the freedom of economic enterprise that we possess, we are able to produce as much industrial goods as all the rest of the world combined—even though we are only six percent of the world's people and possess only six percent of the world's land.

These abundant blessings have come to us through an economic system which rests largely on three pillars:

1. Free enterprise . . . the right to venture . . . the right to choose.
2. Private property . . . the right to own.
3. A market economy . . . the right to exchange.

Working together, we can maintain the strength of these three pillars.

There are some in our midst, nevertheless, who decry free enterprise, who would place business, agriculture, and labor in a government strait jacket.

Our economic order is not perfect, because it is operated by imperfect human beings, but it has given us more of the good things of life than any other system. The fundamental reason is that our economy is free. It must remain free. In that freedom ultimately lies our basic economic strength.

Let us admit the weaknesses that exist. Let us work aggressively to correct them. But never let us make the catastrophic

blunder of putting chains on our basic economic freedom.

Yes, our phenomenal material advances have been the fruit of our freedom—our free enterprise system—our American way of life—our God-given freedom of choice.

The progress of the future must stem from this same basic freedom.

Yet these basic American beliefs, principles, and attitudes are threatened today as never before.

By whom are they threatened?

They are threatened by well-meaning but uninformed people who see the shortcomings of our economic system and believe they can legislate them out of existence. They try to reach the promised land by passing laws. They do not understand our economic system and its limitations. They would load it down with burdens it was never intended to carry. As their schemes begin to break down, more and more controls must be supplied. Patch is placed upon patch, regulation is added to regulation and ultimately, by degrees, freedom is lost—without our desiring to lose it and without our knowing why or how it was lost.

Our heritage of freedom is threatened by another group—self-seeking men who see in government legislation a way to obtain special privilege for themselves or to restrain their competitors. They use demagoguery as a smokescreen to deceive. These people have no love for freedom or enterprise. They would bargain away their birthright for a mess of pottage. They would learn the value of freedom only after it was gone.

A third, still much smaller group is dedicated to the overthrow of the economic and social system that is our tradition. Their philosophy does not stem from Jefferson, but is foreign to our shores. It is a total philosophy of life, atheistic, and utterly opposed to all that we hold dear as a great Christian nation. These men understand our system thoroughly—and they hate it thoroughly. They enlist innocent but willing followers from the uninformed and the unprincipled. Through rabble-rousing and demagoguery they play upon the economic reverses and hardships of the unsuspecting. They promise the impossible, and call black

white, and mislead with fallacies masqueraded as truth.

If we lose our freedoms, it will be to this strange and unlike coalition of the well-intentioned, the slothful, and the subversives.

It will be because we did not care enough—because we were not alert enough—because we were too apathetic to take note while the precious waters of our God-given freedom slipped—drop by drop—down the drain.

Heaven forbid that this should come to pass!

Let us remember that we are a prosperous people today because of a free enterprise system founded on spiritual, not material values. It is founded on freedom of choice—free agency—an eternal God-given principle.

The founding fathers, inspired though they were, did not invent the priceless blessing of individual freedom and respect for the dignity of man. No, that priceless gift to mankind sprang from the God of heaven and not from government. Yes, the founding fathers welded together the safeguards as best they could, but freedom must be continually won to be enjoyed. Let us never forget these facts.

This is America—the land of opportunity! A land choice above all other lands. Let us keep it so!

We, here in America, as Theodore Roosevelt said a half century ago, "hold in our hands the hope of the world, the fate of the coming years, and shame and disgrace will be ours if in our eyes the light of high resolve is dimmed, if we trail in the dust the golden hopes of men."

With God's help the light of high resolve in the eyes of the American people must never be dimmed! Our freedom must—and will—be preserved.

Yes . . . this is a choice land—choice above all others. Blessed by the Almighty, our forebears have made and kept it so. It will continue to be a land of freedom and liberty as long as we are able to advance in the light of sound and enduring principles of right. To sacrifice such principles for momentary expediency—often selfishly motivated—is to endanger our noble heritage and is unworthy of this great American people.

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With all my heart I love this nation. I have lived and traveled abroad just enough to make me appreciate rather fully what we have here. To me, this is not just another nation. This is not just one of a family of nations. This is a nation with a great mission for the benefit and blessing of liberty-loving people everywhere. It is my firm conviction that the Constitution of this land was established by men whom the God of heaven raised up unto this very purpose.

The days ahead are sobering and challenging and will demand the faith, prayers, and loyalty of every American. Our challenge is to keep America strong

and free—strong socially, strong economically, and above all, strong spiritually, if our way of life is to endure. There is no other way. Only in this course is there safety for our nation.

God grant we may resolutely follow this course in humility and faith, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve. Elder Sterling W. Sill will now speak to us.

ELDER STERLING W. SILL

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

One of the most important businesses in the world is the business of holding conventions. This week in every important center in this and other countries men and women will be assembling in groups to discuss their problems, exchange ideas, and develop techniques for accomplishment. I have had an interesting experience during these past few months of meeting with several occupational groups and listening to them discuss their interests. After each experience I have thought how much more interesting, and how tremendously more important, are the things that we discuss in the Church, where we meet and talk about God and eternal life and how to build character and godliness into our own lives.

All education is primarily about ourselves. We study medicine to learn how to keep ourselves well physically. Through the studies of the mind—psychology and psychiatry—we learn how to keep ourselves well mentally. Agriculture is how we feed ourselves. The social studies teach us to live together, successfully. We study law to try to keep ourselves out of trouble. Then we have this important field of religion by use of which we look out for our spiritual welfare.

The biggest problems involved in any of these fields center in us. Probably the thing that we know less about than

anything else in the world is our own individual selves. You can ask a man many questions about science, invention, or history, and he will answer you. But if you ask him to write out an analysis of himself, to tell you about his mind and soul qualities, or if you ask him how he became the kind of man he is—you may not get very good answers. Or suppose that you ask him where he came from, why he is here, or where he is going. What kind of answer do you think you would get? How long do you think it would take someone to get to a given destination if he didn't know where he was going or why the journey was being made? "The Big Three" among life's questions are: Whence? Why? Whither?

The old Persian philosopher Omar Khayyam wrestled long and hard with these questions without getting any very satisfactory answers. He summarizes his conclusions as follows:

I came like Water, and like Wind I go.

Into this Universe, and why not knowing
Nor whence, like Water willy-nilly
flowing:

And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.

Up from Earth's Centre through the
seventh Gate