Follow Your Bliss?

I am sorry to see that Jack Newell, whose thinking, writing, and speaking I have admired since first I read his wonderful essay "An Echo from the Foothills," has fallen to a Johnny-One-Note reverence for Joseph Campbell's flawed philosophies in the spring 1993 issue of *Dialogue*. Newell should, at least, be reminded that Campbell is not well thought of in the scholarly community.

I first became aware of this at the time of the Bill Moyers "Power of Myth" television series. Being somewhat taken in by the charisma of Campbell myself, I wondered why in my text for my class in "Folklore and Religion" Campbell was not represented, even in a footnote. There were the greats in folklore and religion—Levi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, Victor Turner. Why not Campbell, this presence, I wondered.

Then early in 1992, when a biography of Campbell appeared (*A Fire in the Mind*, by Stephen Larsen and Robin Larsen), I read reviews with interest. Wendy Doniger (*New York Times Book Review*, 2 Feb. 1992), Mircea Eliade Professor at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, assessed Campbell and the biography. She chronicles some of Campbell's bigotry and anti-Semitism and then summarily says, "He was certainly not a scholar." She early observes that "Campbell avoided any profound, difficult, messy contact with people or with ideas." These assertions Doniger fleshes out with what were, for me, sad and shocking answers to my earlier questions about why he was not represented in my text. Then Doniger concludes:

> We must be grateful to him for making so many people aware of the existence of great myths . . . but we must regret that he did it so slickly that no one was ever encouraged to go on to the second stage, to do the serious work done by other comparativists. . . . He cooked up the TV dinner of mythology, so that everything tastes the same. . . . He reduced great books to slogans, he made the myths he retold *his* myths, instead of letting them tell their own story. . . .
>
> The evidence in this book presents the image of a man who inspired many people to love his versions of the great myths of the world . . . but who was neither a scholar nor a gentleman.

More recently I read a memoir by Brendan Gill about Campbell (*A New York Life*, Poseidon Press, 1990). Gill knew Campbell well and concludes by observing sadly that the TV series caused his "friend" to "become, if not my enemy, then at least my adversary." And with good reason. The series glorified a man whose bigotry was transparent. Gill tells of a dinner with Campbell when "Campbell spent much of his time arguing that it was of no use to admit blacks [to Sarah Lawrence] because they were 'unable to retain information.'" Gill also tells of Campbell's habit of

meeting people and saying, "You're a Jew, aren't you? I can always spot a Jew." And when astronauts landed on the moon, Campbell told a member of Gill's family that "the moon would be a good place to put Jews." Gill makes clear that Campbell's despising of Freud (and admiring of Jung) had to do at least in part with the fact that Freud was Jewish (while Jung was not).

It appears that Jack Newell, bright humanitarian, has come to sit with Moyers at Campbell's feet, no longer presenting his own good thoughts for us to read, but serving over Campbell's microwaved TV dinners (to pick up the earlier metaphor). Can it be that Newell has fallen for the feel-good message that popularized Campbell's flawed thinking? Are we as LDS intellectuals to adopt Campbell's advice to simply "Follow [our] bliss"? Brendan Gill deplores this simplistic world view:

> If it is only to do whatever makes one happy, then obviously it sanctions selfishness on a colossal scale. . . . It is a selfishness that is the unspoken . . . rationale of that contemporary army of Wall Street yuppies, of junk-bond dealers, of takeover lawyers who have come to be among the most conspicuous members of our society [and Newell might add, the most conspicuous attitude of contemporary LDS society]. . . . Is it not radically at odds with Judeo-Christian traditions that have served as the centuries-old foundations of our society?

I suggest that Jack Newell study more critically the works of Campbell, his idol, and that he trust, instead, his own voice, his own thinking—a good and true voice that we need to hear.

Helen B. Cannon
Logan, Utah

Newell Responds

I am both complimented and troubled by Professor Cannon's sentiments. I am complimented, of course, by the earnestness of her response to my essay in the spring 1993 issue and by her kind words about my earlier writing.

I am troubled, however, on several accounts. While I agree completely that we are most compelling when we speak in our own voice, I believe it is ridiculous to suppose that every idea in my head is original. As individuals and scholars, we owe enormous debts to one another, both near and far. "Liberal Spirituality" is an account of my religious sojourn—as I am living it and as others are influencing it.

It is no secret that Joseph Campbell's work "is not well thought of in the scholarly community." In making this point, however, and citing other scholars to support and extend her view, isn't Helen falling into the pattern for which she faulted me—using others' voices to reinforce her judgment? Speaking in our own voice, and linking ours with others (supporters and critics alike), is the way ideas are formed and refined.

The trick, I suppose, is to tread gracefully along the path between hiding behind others' voices and ignoring or failing to credit them. Erring in either direction is bad business. In looking back at my article, Professor Cannon may be right that I offered more of Campbell in that section than was appropriate for my purpose.

On the issue of Campbell's credibility, readers may recall that I led into the disputed section of my essay with these words: "Campbell and [Ernest] Becker are important to me not because their logic or evidence is airtight but because they continued to stimulate my thinking and raise questions I like to ponder"

(83). That was my bow to Campbell's able critics and an acknowledgement of my own questions about the foundation of some of his work.

What I like about Joseph Campbell's thought is his willingness to risk thinking big, thinking globally. The absence of this quality is precisely what I find limiting about so much academic thought. We have long engaged chiefly in the earth-shattering examination of minutia. Our implicit faith is that our separate studies will add up to something larger, but when someone is bold enough to suggest a greater whole we are disposed to criticize it. And criticize it we should.

From one perspective at least, understanding human culture (and all of nature) is a never-ending seesaw between getting small things in focus and trying to form larger images from them. But the larger images inevitably blur the precision of the constituent elements. If one of those elements happens to be my own, I'm offended by the blurring. And so it goes.

If we use this set of assumptions about knowledge, then the more elements we bring together, the clearer the picture we form—and the more confident we are that we have smoked out false images among the parts. The irony in all this is that the more our mental picure of the world begins to match the bewildering complexity of the real thing, the more incomprehensible the image becomes—mirroring reality as it does. To deal with our disorientation we seesaw back to broader generalizations and look at more particulars—then grapple once again for organizing principles.

Joseph Campbell's sweeping conclusions about the world's myths and religions were flawed, but I admire his courage and imagination in looking for organizing principles. That's the debt we owe him. His ideas compel us to think on a large scale and to search for increasingly valid insights about human nature and the human condition. His mistake, especially in the bloom of his career, was listening too much and too selectively to others' voices. A keener and more willing ear may have opened his reputedly intolerant heart as well.

I thank Professor Cannon for offering her critique for *Dialogue* readers (including me) to ponder.

L. Jackson Newell
Salt Lake City, Utah

Speaking Out

Those in the highest leadership positions of the church would have us believe that in order to be true disciples of Christ, we must follow them in unquestioning obedience and refrain from criticizing their pronouncements or behavior no matter what the resulting injustice or injury to individual members might be. At the very least, we should overlook falsehoods, secret files, or punishment for disagreement with doctrines or procedures as simple manifestations of the humanity of those directing an otherwise divine church and say nothing in the interest of avoiding contention and remain close to the Lord.

The exact opposite is the case. The Jesus who cleared the court of the gentiles in the temple of the money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals would never remain silent in the face of the latter-day desecration of his church by those in positions of power who engage in spiritual oppression. If we are to

be true followers of Christ, we must speak out against this oppression whatever the personal risk involved.

The brethren would have us believe that opposition to them is opposition to the Savior, but it is utterly impossible to see the refusal to disclose the financial dealings of the church, the management of history in order to present the organization in the best possible light, the lying about political activities, or the concealment of documents as behavior that would be sanctioned by one who said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

And how are the compilation of secret files on members, confiscation of temple recommends, and imposition of other sanctions for the sin of disagreement with church leaders manifestations of the love which Jesus said would be the identifying characteristics of his disciples?

It is interesting that after Jesus cleared the temple, "the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them" (Matt. 21:14)—the very people who needed him and who would have found it most difficult to make their way through the crowds surrounding the hagglers and money changers. Jesus stated emphatically that his temple was meant to be a house of prayer for all nations, and surely the commerce in the court of the gentiles would have rendered it virtually impossible for non-Jews, who could not go further into the temple, to commune with God. There are no throngs of buyers and sellers in the lobby of the Salt Lake temple, but how many, both in and out of the church, have found their approach to the Lord impeded by the fearful and self-protective actions of those in positions of authority?

If the leaders of the church do not alter their behavior in the direction of greater openness, humility, and love, as suggested by Paul Toscano in the spring 1993 issue of *Dialogue*, they will move ever farther from Jesus, in whose name they claim to speak and act, and the day will surely come, if it has not already arrived, when the tabernacle, the temples, the highrise office building, and the Corporation of the President will remain but the Lord will say unto those in authority, "Behold, your church is left unto you, desolate."

Eileen Davies
Salt Lake City, Utah

Uncannily Accurate

I want to compliment D. Michael Quinn for his heady, revealing examination of the events and personalities found in his article, "Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon Political Conflicts," in the summer 1993 issue. With a minor exception, his account is uncannily accurate with what I recall.

Since the publication of Quinn's article I have been inundated with questions from friends, colleagues, and acquaintances asking me about my involvement with the infamous BYU Spy Scandal. The events took place in 1966, some twenty-five-plus years ago. I was completely ignorant of much of the controversy between Ezra Taft Benson and his fellows of the Quorum of the Twelve. Had I been aware, I am confident I would have not been involved with either the John Birch Society, the Young Americans for Freedom, or the spying incident.

What Quinn writes of the incident is essentially correct. I recall being asked to attend Ray Hillam's "Current Affairs" class, Political Science 105 I be-

lieve it was, right after the Wilkinson address. We were told not to bring up the topic, but to simply report what Hillam said about Wilkinson's remarks. As I recall, Hillam was asked about it by a student and his reply was something like, "No comment, I don't want to get fired." I remember feeling very uncomfortable in what I was doing, and distinctly recall burying my head in my hands during the class period and saying over and over to myself, "This is wrong, this is wrong." There were at least three or four other "spies" in the classroom. I did not even bother to report. I ceased active involvement with both the John Birch Society and the Young Americans for Freedom shortly after, and left to serve a mission in southern Austrailia a few months later. After I returned to BYU from my mission, I attended a few JBS meetings for a time, but it was more a sop to my landlord than from any conviction. By 1972 I was completely disenchanted by them.

Quinn used my letter of 29 January 1965 (sic 1966) to David O. McKay as evidence of a continuing effort to "extract 'pro-communist views'" from certain professors (n212). I do not dispute that there may have been continued efforts of surveillance or that some Birchers and YAFers attempted to "extract" such statements, but I was not involved. Thus, Quinn is mistaken in his use of my letter to President McKay as evidence of a conspiracy to do so. The letter was written of my own volition, without any consulting or acknowledgement to anyone. It was in reply to a statement made to me privately by my freshman English instructor, to the effect that the reason why Ezra Taft Benson was sent to Europe was because he would not keep quiet about political issues.

This shocked me, and ate away at my own convictions until, in my own naivete, I wrote and asked President McKay if it were true. In retrospect, I doubt if President McKay even saw the letter. His secretary, Clare Middlemiss, forwarded it to President Wilkinson, who demanded to know the teacher's name. During a personal appointment in Wilkinson's office, he was most persistent, and I was made to feel my status as a student was threatened unless I revealed her name, which was Washburn. It is my understanding that she did not return as a teacher, whether because she was a graduate student and completed her program or was dismissed, to this day I do not know.

To say I feel badly about my participation in the Spy Scandal and the probable dismissal of an English instructor is an understatement, especially in light of the fact that what Ms. Washburn told me privately is true. From this whole experience I have learned that our leaders are men, and as such, they can get carried away, and that when they do, they are capable of making some horrendous mistakes in judgment. I was young, foolish, immature, naive, and too trusting of certain individuals. I resent Middlemiss fowarding what was a private letter from me to the prophet David O. McKay to Wilkinson, and I resent his leaving them in his files to be later essentially opened for public scrutiny. I do not resent Quinn for using them, as an historian, he is only doing his job, examining the documents and interpreting their significance.

Further, in retrospect, to suggest that the victims of the Spy Scandal, men like Ed Morrell, Ray Hillam, Louis Midgely, and Richard Poll, were in some way connected to some mythical "Communist Conspiracy" or were "Communist Sympathizers or Dupes" is ludicrous. I have the utmost respect

for them all. After my mission I took courses from both Morrell and Midgely. Morrell served as a counselor in my own Provo East Stake presidency, served as a mission president, and then as a bishop of my sister ward. Poll is the author of one of the most significant and meaningful essays about the church that I have ever read: "What the Church Means to People Like Me" (*Dialogue*, Winter 1967).

As a consequence of my experiences, I now temper my own sustaining of the leaders of the church by reserving the right to determine for myself whether their words and deeds are of God or not. This is in accordance with what even Brigham Young preached (see *Journal of Discourses* 9:150). Certainly, in the case of the BYU Spy Scandal, the activities of leaders and men whom I trusted were not inspired. I am saddened to find church leaders once again apparently involved in spying, that is, keeping secret files and dossiers on certain invididuals. I know from personal experience that this is wrong.

Curt E. Conklin
Provo, Utah

"Spy" Reply

D. Michael Quinn's article on Elder Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon political conflicts (summer 1993) detailed some very interesting history. Let's give Quinn at least a "B" or an "A" for all the relevant material he has researched and presented—it must have taken months and possibly years of dedicated research and digging.

I would give Quinn less than an "A" for his accuracy in reporting and interpreting my own remarks in a telephone discussion with him, and I question Quinn when he quotes Elder Benson and others, then procedes to tell us what they actually meant to say or what unnamed person they were talking about, or what their motives were for their actions or statements. Quinn may be right in some of his assumptions, but how can we prove or disprove it if the person quoted never got as specific as Quinn?

Surprised I was to read about my alleged "spy" activities when I was a student at the University of Utah (8-9) and at BYU (51, n211). Contrary to Quinn's report, I never in my life took a class from J. D. Williams or anyone else expressly to "monitor . . . classroom statements" (9) so I could report to Reed Benson or any of my other friends or associates. J. D. Williams was a very talented and interesting teacher of political science, and I was glad to learn from him, although we differed in our political views. I did often collect campus and metropolitan newspaper articles and editorials regarding campus political events, protests, and speakers. I also attended some public lectures and sometimes observed students protests or demonstrations. On a few occasions I shared my observations and a few newspaper clipplings with Reed Benson, who had previously expressed a desire to be kept informed of same. At the U of U and at BYU I was never associated with any students, faculty, administrators, or Provo chapter of the John Birch Society in any sort of organized "spy ring." During the 1965-66 school year when I was "listed by BYU professors as part of this spy ring" (51n211), I was actually a graduate student at the U of U, was involved in a political campaign in Salt Lake City, and was in the fall of 1966 drafted into the U.S. army.

Quinn's first paragraph on page 72 related the fact that I lost my employment in the Church Publications Department. I can't be certain that I lost my job because of my political views or activities, neither do I know that it was "the state coordinator of the Birch Society" who informed Elder Benson of this incident.

In Quinn's footnote 53 (14-15) he calls the "Citizens for Honest Government" (CHG) a "Birch Society spin-off group" and says that I, as its chairman, was a member of the Birch Society. I do not believe that I had become a member of the Birch Society when I organized and chaired the CHG.

May I now make a few remarks regarding our attitudes and our treatment of one another?

If God controls the selection of those who sit in the presiding councils of the church, should we not go the extra mile to support and sustain them, rather than criticize them? I am reluctant to put forth my hand to steady the ark of God (see Num. 1:51; 1 Cor. 13:9-10; D&C 85:8), to criticize any of the "Brethren."

Following the earthly ministry of Christ, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:20). In a revelation during a church conference in 1831 the Lord said, "I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). One of the Savior's messages in his visits to the Nephites was, "he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Ne. 11:29).

Are we not too often guilty of contention in politics and in the church? Do we as a people need to repent of our pride, our contentions, and our criticisms of the leaders of the church? Can we learn to love one another, to pray, and to listen to the promptings of the Spirit, which will unite us in harmony and truth?

Bryon Cannon Anderson
West Valley City, Utah

Quinn Responds

I appreciate the further insights and comments of Curt E. Conklin and Byron Cannon Anderson. Their perspectives are important, since they were insiders to some of the events in my article on Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon political conflicts. However, part of Conklin's response is a slight misreading of the text in my article, while Anderson asserts more serious criticisms.

The article didn't cite Conklin's January 1966 letter as evidence of efforts "to extract 'pro-Communist' views from their professors." Instead, his letter was in the footnote for the *previous* sentence which summarized activities of several BYU students during the year before they were recruited as part of the BYU "Spy Ring" in 1966. Although I regarded their activities prior to April 1966 as more than coincidental, I had no evidence that they co-ordinated among themselves or were co-ordinated by someone else. Therefore, I merely cataloged the evidence of their prior activism against Professor Richard Poll as a demonstration of their partisanship before Stephen Hays Russell selected them to monitor BYU professors. I didn't state or suggest they were functioning as "a conspiracy" prior to April 1966. Conklin seems to have read the footnote reference to his letter as my comment on the period *after* April 1966, rather than (as I intended) on the period

before then. In a rewrite, I would make that chronological distinction more emphatic. The bulk of Conklin's letter was his candid reflection which I found very moving.

I regret that Byron Cannon Anderson disputes my "accuracy in reporting and interpreting my own remarks in a telephone discussion with [Quinn]." Our January 1993 conversation began with my request for him to give his perspective on the controversy involving Ezra Taft Benson and the John Birch Society. I had no intention to inquire about what Ernest Wilkinson (not I) called campus "espionage," but explained I was making this request for an upcoming article in *Dialogue*. In fact, I hardly asked Anderson any direct question, because he immediately began to reminisce with details that I wrote down as fast as I could.

Once he started reminiscing, Anderson's first words were that Reed Benson introduced him to the John Birch Society as a freshman at the University of Utah, and that he joined the JBS while still an undergraduate. Anderson added that Reed's mother and brother Mark were formal members of the society. This was all new to me. As I wrote on page 8 of the article, he then volunteered the information that Reed asked Anderson "to provide him with the names of students who were active in liberal causes" at the University of Utah. Anderson's letter restates that he supplied such information to "Reed Benson, who had previously expressed a desire to be kept informed of same."

On the telephone, Anderson immediately added that he attended one or more classes taught by J.D. Williams whom he liked personally, despite the difference in their political views. From his comments, I concluded that Anderson meant his attendance in J. D.'s class was an extension of what Reed Benson had asked him to do. Anderson's letter now denies that this was intentional monitoring, but that was the context of what he told me about Reed's request to monitor campus liberals. Until Anderson described it, I had no idea that there had been any surveillance by students at the University of Utah, much less that this involved Reed Benson.

There are obviously differing views about Anderson's alleged involvement in campus monitoring. Anderson's letter said he merely "attended some public lectures and sometimes observed student protests or demonstrations" at the University of Utah, and then reported back to Reed Benson. It was BYU's pro-Birch Wilkinson who used the word "espionage" when Reed first proposed such activities in 1960 for the Provo school. In recognition of those two polarized views, my article used both the neutral term "monitoring" (usually without quotes) and the judgmental term "espionage" (in quotes).

My note 211 on page 51 said that BYU professors claimed in 1966 that Anderson had been monitoring them. The note observed that he was not a BYU student that year. Immediately after his remarks concerning Professor Williams, however, Anderson told me on the phone (and I quoted his words exactly in the article): "I transferred to Brigham Young University where I was involved in the same sorts of things." Again, Anderson was volunteering answers to a question I never asked him.

BYU's student directories show that Anderson was enrolled from fall 1964 through the summer of 1965. He then returned to the University of Utah as a graduate student from fall 1965 through spring 1966. Therefore, if Anderson's statement to me was accurate, then he was "involved in the same

sorts" of student monitoring at BYU a year before the famous "Spy Ring" of spring 1966. This is supported by the allegations of BYU professors who didn't specify the time period Anderson had monitored them. I buried most of this in a footnote, but his letter requires its discussion here.

Anderson's letter also says that he wasn't a member of the JBS when he organized and chaired the Citizens for Honest Government in March 1966. However, its other executive officers were the prominent Mormon Birchers J. Reese Hunter and Mark E. Anderson. In the *Salt Lake Tribune*'s report of the Utah Birch Society's dinner for Robert Welch a month later, Anderson was listed as one of the banquet's organizers. And he had told me on the phone that he joined the Birch Society during his first years at the University of Utah.

Concerning the account of Anderson's loss of church employment (which again he surprised me by volunteering), I regarded him as a victim of anti-Birch sentiment at LDS headquarters. His words on the phone to me were that "the head" of the Birch Society in Utah told Benson, and reported back the apostle's response to Anderson. The article used the phrase "state coordinator," since that was the official term as I understood from published Birch sources. A historian is always limited by access to sources and one's personal abilities, but I did my best to present Byron Cannon Anderson's experience as accurately as I could from the combination of evidence created in the 1960s and his direct statements to me in 1993.

Anderson's letter concludes that my article about Ezra Taft Benson and the other general authorities was mere "criticisms of the leaders of the church." To the contrary, I bent over backward to present an evenhanded narrative of all sides in a controversy which was polarized and bitter (even to the casual observer of the 1960s). In response to the objection of Anderson (and possibly other supporters of Elder Benson's views in the 1960s), I'll add something here that I decided not to put even in the footnotes of the article.

What I knew of the mid-1960s controversy between Hugh B. Brown and Ezra Taft Benson I read from the newspapers as a returned missionary. I felt close to the philosophy Hugh B. Brown expressed on many issues, but I had a testimony from personal experience that Elder Benson was a prophet, seer, and revelator. During this very public controversy, school friends and ward members sometimes asked me which of the two church leaders I thought was "right." Privately and publicly (in testimony meetings) during the 1960s, I said that I felt both President Brown and Apostle Benson were each carrying out God's mission for them. God didn't find it necessary to sort out the controversy between those two prophets, seers, and revelators, so I've never felt it necessary to reconcile the apparent contradiction in my affirming they were both doing his will.

Whole sections of the Benson-Birch article surprised me during my dragnet approach to research. However, I did my best to be fair to all concerned in narrating that experience. Other authors may feel it necessary to identify who they think wore the White-hat and who wore the Black-hat in controversial events. Or at least to inform the reader who the author regards as "right" and who was "wrong." Instead, I think it's usually better for historians to leave value judgments to the reader, even though authors may have strong opinions of their own. I've never tried to ignore evidence I disliked or to skew its

presentation to force the reader to a predetermined conclusion. That kind of "objectivity" was the goal in my biography of the controversial J. Reuben Clark, and I was pleased to learn that both his supporters and detractors felt my book had vindicated their views of Counselor Clark. In twenty years of writing about the Mormon hierarchy, I've felt I was describing White-hats who were sometimes caught in the dust storms and stampedes of mortal life.

D. Michael Quinn
Salt Lake City, Utah