

Anxiously Engaged: Amy Brown Lyman and Relief Society Charity Work, 1917-45

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IN MARCH 1918, LDS CHURCH PRESIDENT Joseph F. Smith called Relief Society general secretary Amy Brown Lyman into his office to discuss the church's cooperative work with the Red Cross. The church had agreed to assume responsibility for looking after the welfare of LDS servicemen and their families soon after the onset of World War I. The previous fall this had led Lyman and three other Relief Society women representing Red Cross chapters from the four most populous counties in Utah to seek out special training in the latest social work techniques at a special conference held by the Mountain Division of the Red Cross in Denver.¹ After their return Smith had shown considerable interest in the methods they had learned there, and expressed his feeling that "if there was anything in the Church that needed improvement it was the charity work" as there was "much duplication and waste of effort and funds." Believing that a more efficient approach could be used to the church's advantage, he proposed that the Relief Society organize a social service department where these new techniques could be tested and implemented.²

1. Amy Brown Lyman, "Social Service Work in the Relief Society, 1917-1928: Including a Brief History of the Relief Society Social Service Department and Brief Mention of Other Relief Society and Community Social Service Activities," 3, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection, Archives and Manuscripts, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. These women and the Red Cross chapters they represented were Amy Brown Lyman, Salt Lake City; Annie D. Palmer, Provo; Cora Kasius, Ogden; and Mary L. Hendrickson, Logan.

2. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 4.

Amy Brown Lyman's life would be filled with noteworthy accomplishments, but this meeting with Smith marked the beginning of what was arguably her most important achievement: building a modern social welfare organization serving the needs of the LDS church. While doing so, she marshalled the talents and energies of Relief Society women in a movement aimed at helping needy men and women and improving the quality of life in their communities. In leading this endeavor Lyman faced daunting challenges, serious conflicts over goals and methods, and occasional disappointment, but ultimately her efforts bore fruit leaving a lasting legacy of reform and, at the same time, inspiring the hearts and minds of a generation of Mormon women.³

Both by temperament and inclination, Amy Brown Lyman was a natural choice to have undertaken such a task. Born in 1872, she was raised in the tiny farming settlement of Pleasant Grove, Utah. Her father served there as bishop for twenty-eight years, and for most of that time was also the town's mayor and its representative to the territorial legislature. To the women of the community, her mother was known as a sage whose advice was eagerly sought.⁴ Together, her parents provided leadership and coun-

3. Lyman is one of the more important figures in twentieth-century Mormonism. Though brief studies have appeared examining portions of her activities, none adequately chronicles the range of her accomplishments. Among these are her own short autobiography *In Retrospect: Autobiography of Amy Brown Lyman* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1945), which first appeared in serialized form in 1942 issues of the *Relief Society Magazine*; essays by Loretta L. Heffner, which include a short biography, "Amy Brown Lyman: Raising the Quality of Life for All," in Vicki Burgess-Olson, ed., *Sister Saints* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), and two articles, "This Decade Was Different: Relief Society Social Services Department, 1919-1929," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Autumn 1982): 64-73, and "The National Women's Relief Society and the U.S. Sheppard-Towner Act," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (Summer 1982): 255-67. Jill Mulvay Derr's writings on the Relief Society are also important to understanding Lyman's activities: "Changing Relief Society Charity to Make Way for Welfare, 1930-1944," in Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, eds., *New Views on Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987); (with Janath Russell Cannon) "Resolving Differences/Achieving Unity: Lessons from the History of Relief Society," in Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen, eds., *As Women of Faith: Talks Selected from the BYU Women's Conferences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989); and (with Cannon and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher) *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993). Vera White Pohlman's *In Memoriam: Amy Brown Lyman, 1872-1959, Biographical Summary and Funeral Services* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 1960) is a concise summary of Lyman's activities and accomplishments but is not widely available.

4. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 5; John Zimmerman Brown, ed., *Autobiography of Pioneer John Brown, 1820-1896* (Salt Lake City: John Zimmerman Brown, 1941), 18, 140, 245; Mary Kimball, "Amy Brown Lyman, R.S. Magazine, Jan. 1929," 2, typescript, Amy Lyman Engar Collection, copy in my possession; Amy Lyman Engar Oral History, interviews by

sel to the people of Pleasant Grove on matters large and small. Precocious and self-confident, even as a youth Amy was not afraid to take charge and it was not long before her forthright, no-nonsense manner earned her the nick-name "Ready-aim-fire."⁵ Years later family members would joke that she inherited the energy and intelligence of both sides of the family. As she matured, her keen mind, able to hold onto the larger perspective while attending to details coupled with her boundless energy, produced a woman of unusual ability. Able to grasp situations quickly and clearly, she offered advice freely about problems both personal and institutional. Not afraid to speak her mind, she possessed an enormous sense of integrity which led her to rigorously defend that which she felt was right, and in any argument she could hold her own. Just as importantly, free of pretense or false pride, she was unafraid to admit her errors but remained unwilling to dwell on them. While learning from the past, she never allowed herself to look back in regret. As an adult the strength of her personality manifested itself most obviously in a business-like and outspoken manner, and in a swift and purposeful walk that was so intimidating, it is said, that she could part a crowd merely by walking towards it, even when she was well into her eighties. Her manner led some to think her cold, but intimates knew her to be sympathetic and kind hearted, sincerely concerned for the welfare of her associates and deeply moved by the suffering of others. Permeating all these attributes was an unwavering devotion to the LDS church and its leaders.⁶

In her late teens Lyman received normal training at nearby Brigham Young Academy in Provo and after graduation taught school for six years in Provo and Salt Lake City.⁷ Like other young women of her generation who later rose to positions of prominence in social reform, Amy was ambitious and not eager to assume the constrained role of a Victorian housewife.

David Hall, 1991-93, tapes in my possession; Susan Elizabeth (Beth) Swensen Driggs Oral History, interview by David Hall, 1991, tape in my possession.

5. Driggs Oral History.

6. Interview with Emily Pollei, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1992, tape in my possession; Amy Lyman Engar, "Amy Brown Lyman: Transcribed from a talk given at the University of Utah Institute 'Women of the Restoration,' February 26, 1987," original in possession of Amy Lyman Engar, copy in my possession; Vera White Pohlman Oral History, interviews by David Hall, 1991-93, tapes in my possession; Leona Fetzer Wintch Oral History, interviews by David Hall, 1991-92, tapes in my possession; Mark K. Allen Oral History, interviews by David Hall, 1991-92, tapes in my possession; Engar Oral History. Pohlman, Wintch, and Allen each worked with Lyman as adults over the course of many years in widely differing situations yet their observations concerning her character are fairly consistent. Amy Lyman Engar was raised by her grandparents, Amy Brown and Richard R. Lyman, after the untimely deaths of her parents. Beth Driggs is a niece who was closely associated with the Lymans from her childhood.

7. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 19-23.

At twenty-three she wrote a friend that she was somewhat hesitant in her feelings toward "the event" (marriage). "I want," she stated, "to see & hear a few more things before I sink into oblivion."⁸ Typically she acted on this desire: before her 1896 marriage to Richard R. Lyman, son of Mormon apostle Francis M. Lyman, she traveled to Ann Arbor with her future father-in-law to attend Richard's graduation from the University of Michigan. She then joined a group of purchasing agents from Z.C.M.I., a Mormon-owned mercantile store, on a trip to New York, Boston, and Washington.⁹

By the time of their marriage, Richard had won an appointment as professor of civil engineering at the University of Utah. In 1902, during his first sabbatical year, the Lymans again traveled east, this time to begin Richard's graduate studies at Cornell.¹⁰ A stopover along the way for a summer session at the University of Chicago proved especially important to Amy. Out of curiosity, she enrolled in a course on the relatively new subject of sociology which familiarized her with the scientific approaches then being developed to understand and resolve societal problems. Some of these new techniques included the use of a confidential exchange to coordinate the activities of community relief agencies and the adoption of the so-called case-work approach, which emphasized helping individuals to help themselves. The reasoned, practical nature of these methods appealed to Amy's logical mind and made a deep impression on her thinking.¹¹ When a field assignment for the course took her to Hull House where she met noted reformer Jane Addams, Lyman was so impressed that she

8. Amy Brown Lyman to Will Hayes, 24 Feb. 1895, 1a, original in possession of Barbara Carlson, copy in my possession. Hayes, the widowed husband of Amy's sister Margaret, was serving in the Eastern States Mission of the LDS church at the time. For examples of recent work which include examinations of the backgrounds of prominent female social workers, see Robert M. Crunden, *Ministers of Reform: The Progressives' Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Lela B. Costin, *Two Sisters for Social Justice: A Biography of Grace and Edith Abbott* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); and Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

9. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 25.

10. The Lyman's first child, Wendell Brown Lyman, was born in 1897.

11. For a description of the confidential exchange and case-work techniques by a prominent social worker of the era who took a leading role in their development, see Mary E. Richmond, *Social Diagnosis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1917). Lyman later became personally acquainted with Richmond and used her book in training social workers for the church. See Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 116. For a recent treatment of the development of modern social work techniques, see James Leiby, *A History of Social Welfare Work in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), esp. chaps. 7-9 covering developments from 1850-1919. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History; Evelyn Hodges Lewis Oral History, interview by David Hall, 1992, tapes in my possession.

sought first-hand experience through briefly serving as a volunteer with the Chicago Charities. Amy later said that she felt that during these days in Chicago a curtain had been drawn from her mind. By the end of the summer she was convinced that "no work could be more important and satisfying than that of helping to raise human life to its highest level."¹² Yet these seeds planted in 1902, which sank roots deeply into her soul, would not grow to fruition for nearly fifteen years.

After completion of Richard's studies at Cornell, the Lymans returned to Utah and Amy assumed the duties of a housewife. Then in October 1909 Amy, now a thirty-seven-year-old mother of two, was called to the general board of the church's Relief Society.¹³ With her concern for others and lack of pretense, she quickly ingratiated herself with the other women of the board while her keen mind and genius for organization earned their respect.¹⁴ In 1913 she was appointed general secretary of the organization, and at that time President Joseph F. Smith gave her several specific assignments, including instructions to make a thorough study of modern social work methods.¹⁵ Though most of her energies over the next several years were devoted to updating the administration of the Relief Society, increasingly she also had opportunities to become involved in social welfare work.

During July and August of 1916 and 1917, for example, the Relief Society established milk kitchens at five schools along Salt Lake City's west side in an effort to improve the diet of poorer children in the area. Lyman presided over one of these stations where, in addition to providing milk, Relief Society workers went out into the community and taught motherhood education classes, examined babies, and made home visits.¹⁶ About the same time she became involved with the work of the church's new Social Advisory committee which included officers of the Relief Society and other auxiliary organizations. Reflecting the strong moral overtones of progressive America, the committee began as an effort to promote the moral retrenchment of LDS youth, but early on it also became concerned

12. Lyman, *In Retrospect* 30, 114; Engar Oral History; Amy Brown Lyman, "Interview at KSL," no date, 3, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection; see also Heffner, "Amy Brown Lyman," 102.

13. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 35-36. A second child, Margaret, was born while the Lymans were in New York.

14. Annie Wells Cannon, "Mrs. Lyman as a Relief Society Executive," no date, 2, typescript, Amy Lyman Engar Collection, copy in my possession.

15. Amy Brown Lyman, "Relief Society Address, Parley's Ward, March 1, 1957," 1, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection. Included at this time were his instructions to update the business and record-keeping practices of the organization.

16. Amy Brown Lyman, "Notes from the Field," *Relief Society Magazine* 3 (Aug. 1916): 462; Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 68-69.

with social welfare work. In 1916 the committee began to study the case-work method and maintained a growing interest in modern social work techniques.¹⁷

After the onset of the World War I, Lyman was named a member of the State Council on Defense and served as chair of its social service committee. Nationally, the war prompted concern on the part of the War Department and the Red Cross about social problems that were expected to arise on the homefront. As a result, state governors were urged to send delegates to the June 1917 meeting of the National Conference of Social Work in Pittsburgh where these problems were to be discussed and plans laid to address them. Utah's governor Simon Bamberger appointed Lyman as one of the state's delegates to this meeting and Joseph F. Smith selected her to serve simultaneously as a representative of the church and Relief Society.¹⁸ At this meeting civilian relief efforts received special emphasis and plans were made to establish training centers under the auspices of the Red Cross, where instruction could be received on how to conduct the work according to "the best social practice."¹⁹ This was the purpose of the special Red Cross institute held in Denver which Lyman and the other Relief Society women attended in the fall of 1917. While there they received additional training in modern social work techniques from Denver's City and County Charity Department.²⁰

17. Thomas G. Alexander, "Between Revivalism and the Social Gospel: The Latter-day Saint Social Advisory Committee, 1916-22," *Brigham Young University Studies* 23 (Winter 1983):26, 27. For a treatment that places the committee's activities in the context of other church auxiliaries, see Alexander's *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), esp. chap. 8, "The Church Auxiliary Organizations," 125-56. In 1918 the committee with other church auxiliaries sent delegates to the National Conference of Social Work meeting in Kansas City. Lyman attended as part of this delegation.

18. Rebecca N. Nibley also attended with Lyman as a delegate from the Relief Society. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 3.

19. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 3. Scholars long viewed World War I as having fragmented the progressive coalition of the early twentieth century, but more recently historians examining the period have demonstrated that parts of the coalition continued to press for reforms throughout the 1920s. Playing a dominant role during this dynamic period were local and national women's organizations. See James T. Patterson, *The New Deal and the States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), esp. chap. 1, "The 48 States in the 1920's," 3-25, for an account of this period as a time of modified but continued reform. J. Stanley Lemons presented a detailed look at women's reform efforts in the 1920s in *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973). More recently, Robyn Muncy's *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform* focused on the cooperative efforts of local women's groups in association with the Federal Children's Bureau. LDS Relief Society welfare work and social reform efforts, which began in earnest during the war, fit well into this more recent interpretation.

20. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 3, 4.

All this set the stage for Joseph F. Smith's meeting with Lyman the following March during which he discussed his concern for the need of a social service department in the church. This meeting seems also in part to have been prompted by an article in *The Survey* (a prominent organ of the day for social workers and reformers) which had praised the willingness of Salt Lake City's Mormon bishops to turn to the local Charity Organization Society for assistance in performing family investigations and coordinating church relief efforts with those of other community agencies.²¹ Smith found it disturbing that bishops needed to look outside the church to perform their duties and concluded that if a central office was required to clear cases and coordinate activities, one should be created by the Relief Society. Lyman agreed but felt she needed additional experience before she could accept this new responsibility, so in November 1918 she returned to Denver for six more weeks of training under the supervision of the Denver Charity office.²²

Smith's death later that month seemed to call into question the plans laid out for a social service department, but by January 1919 his successor, Heber J. Grant, had given the go-ahead for its formal establishment.²³ Initially staffed only by Lyman and one other employee, the department soon proved so efficient that other community agencies overburdened by wartime needs and postwar recession, eagerly relinquished to Lyman's department that portion of their workload involving supervision of LDS families. The first of these transfers began that January when twenty-five families, victims of the influenza epidemic, were turned over to Relief Society supervision by the Red Cross. In August, with the establishment of the Salt Lake Community Clinic, the Relief Society accepted the responsibility to investigate all LDS families seeking treatment there. In the fall a similar request came from the juvenile court. As a result of these added responsibilities, three more workers were hired, but these new tasks proved so time consuming that the department was temporarily forced to turn down another request: investigating and supervising the cases of LDS families seeking Mother's pensions.²⁴

21. "Jottings," *The Survey* 38 (16 June 1917): 252.

22. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 5. Despite Smith's concern, even after the church established its own social welfare agency through the Relief Society, it was still necessary to clear cases with other community agencies through the local Charity Organization Society to avoid duplication of services. Eventually the task of serving as a central clearing house was taken over by the county welfare departments. Vera Pohlman to David Hall, 15 Dec. 1993.

23. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 6.

24. *Ibid.*, 6-8. Utah had passed a law providing for widows' pensions in 1913. See State of Utah, *First Biennial Report of the State Department of Public Welfare, July 1, 1936-June 30, 1938, With supplementary data January, 1935 through December, 1938 and a Review of Public*

Thus, within the first year of the department's operation, a pattern was established which would prove typical during the next decade: added responsibilities brought new requests to the Presiding Bishopric's office which, when approved, brought an increase in funding to employ more workers, with the result that the presence of more workers enabled the department to accept additional requests for assistance from other agencies in the community.²⁵ Over the next several years, in addition to the Red Cross, the Social Service Department worked closely with: the County Charity Department, the county hospital, city and county courts, the county jail, the police, the Salvation Army, the Traveler's Aid Society, the YWCA, as well as the Charity Organization Society.²⁶

Throughout her career, Lyman believed that leaders should seek the best available individuals to aid them, and in the Social Service Department she surrounded herself with women of talent and intelligence whom she formed into a corps of dedicated professionals. Under Lyman's direction her staff's competent manner and demonstrated efficiency drew praise from state and local community leaders. With Lyman's encouragement to serve community as well as church, over the years many veterans of the Social Service Department moved on to positions of responsibility in other private or government welfare agencies both in Utah and elsewhere.²⁷

Although Lyman's efforts were lauded in most quarters, not all were pleased by the influence she wielded. Susa Young Gates, formidable daughter of Brigham Young and member of the Relief Society general board, became an early and outspoken critic of Lyman's efforts to modernize the church's charity work. Gates was particularly concerned when she felt that activities in the Utah Stake were viewed by Lyman and others as an example for the church's general relief efforts.²⁸ There, under the

Aid in Utah Prior to Establishment of the State Department of Public Welfare in May, 1935 (Salt Lake City: State of Utah, Bureau of Research and Statistics, 1939), 3. Vera W. Pohlman, then director of the Bureau of Research and Statistics, authored this report.

25. Compounding the difficulties brought to Lyman and her staff by these steadily increasing demands for services was the church's own tenuous fiscal situation in the 1920s. President Heber J. Grant's efforts to place the church on a sound financial footing meant that each of Lyman's requests for funding was subject to careful review. Lyman, "Social Service Work," *passim*. For an overview of the church's economic affairs during this period, see Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, esp. chap. 5, "The Temporal Kingdom," 74-92.

26. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 4-8.

27. Wintch Oral History; Pohlman Oral History; Lewis Oral History.

28. Susa Young Gates to the President and Board of the Relief Society, 4 Nov. 1919, Susa Young Gates Collection, archives, historical department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS archives). I am indebted to Jill Derr for bringing this significant correspondence to my attention. See Cannon and Derr, "Resolving Differences/Achieving Unity," 128-31.

direction of stake president Joseph Keeler and stake Relief Society president Inez Knight Allen, the stake Relief Society organized a community welfare department in May 1919. Sixty stake and ward officers were trained to aid in its functioning, and it handled cases and distributed aid so efficiently that it enjoyed broad support among local bishops, who quickly came to depend on its services.²⁹ Gates feared that if the church adopted the use of specially trained workers in a central agency, LDS charity work would be radically altered and older women who had performed well for years in similar roles as Relief Society visiting teachers would be excluded from meaningful participation because they would not be able to adapt to new, more rigorous standards. She was proud that the church had long administered aid without cost and feared that adoption of "commercialized charity" and creation of a professional, salaried bureaucracy would eat up in overhead those funds which had been intended to help the poor. She also warned of the demoralizing effects that the professionalization of the church's charity efforts would have not only on those receiving aid but on those dispensing it as well.³⁰

Both Lyman and Gates were noted for their strong wills and Susa remained determined in her opposition to adoption of the same modern methods that Amy just as vigorously recommended. Their disagreement seems to have come to a head during a January 1920 meeting in the office of church president Heber J. Grant in which each remained so fixed in her views that they were referred back to the general board to seek a solution.³¹ Both women were sincere in their views and each found it difficult to compromise on an issue that had such important implications. Yet despite their differences, both suppressed their disagreement out of loyalty to the organization, and co-workers not aware of the matter did not sense any animosity between them.³²

When the aged Emmeline B. Wells was replaced by Clarissa S. Williams as Relief Society general president early in 1921, Lyman won the new leader's unqualified support for her efforts. Yet, despite Gates's fears and continued opposition, adoption of more efficient approaches ultimately supplemented rather than supplanted the traditional charity activities of

29. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 6.

30. "Gates to President and Board"; Cannon and Derr, 129-30.

31. Susa Young Gates to Elizabeth McCune, 21 Jan. 1920, Gates Collection; Cannon and Derr, 130-31. Gates apparently remained opposed to Lyman's activities even after her resignation and release from the general board early in 1922. See Richard R. Lyman Journal, 26 July 1922, Richard R. Lyman Collection, Archives and Manuscripts, Special Collections, Lee Library.

32. Vera W. Pohlman, a perceptive observer, began working in the Relief Society offices in April 1920 as Lyman's personal secretary. She saw the two women interact on a daily basis and never sensed a strain in their relationship. Pohlman Oral History.

Relief Society women, and old and new methods united together in a complimentary relationship which effectively furthered the organization's efforts to serve the needy. The Social Service Department developed primarily into a resource agency for bishops and ward Relief Society presidents and served as a liaison between them and other community agencies. Over the next several years Lyman's department continued to expand its range of services, and in addition to the previously mentioned activities, it operated an employment bureau and a child-placing service and aided bishops by providing counseling services for difficult cases. The department also supervised the training of stake and ward Relief Society leaders through its Social Service Institutes which lasted from a few days to six weeks and were designed to provide specialized instruction in modern social work techniques. In addition many students received supervised training at the headquarters of the Social Service Department in the new occupation of social worker. While the institutes instructed stake and ward Relief Society officers, Lyman was also concerned that the general membership become familiar with the same concepts about the underlying causes of poverty and the resources available for its alleviation. This led to the introduction of a long-running series of monthly lessons dealing with social problems and their remedies which appeared in the *Relief Society Magazine* as part of the organization's course of study.³³

The department continued to develop and to provide valued services to the church and the community, but despite its accomplishments over the years Lyman's emphasis on social work and her influence with Relief Society leaders continued to concern some members of the general board. They feared that social welfare work would so dominate the agenda of the Relief Society that other activities designed to fulfill its educational and spiritual roles would be excluded. Perhaps in response to the large number of Social Service Institutes held during the preceding years, in 1928 general board member Annie Wells Cannon complained to President Grant that Relief Society president Williams was not listening to her counselors but was instead allowing general secretary Lyman to run the organization. In her view "the spirit of the Gospel and religion seem to have disappeared, and it seems to be a social welfare organization."³⁴

33. Lyman, "Social Service Work," 1, 6-27; Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 64-69; Cannon and Derr, 131-32.

34. Heber J. Grant, diary, 24 and 27 Feb. 1928, in Alexander, "Between Revivalism and the Social Gospel," 37. Grant was disturbed by this conversation, and Cannon's comments were not without merit: while Lyman was unquestionably committed to the spiritual and intellectual development of Relief Society women, under her influence the Relief Society of the 1920s was perhaps more active in social welfare matters than any time before or since. See Heffner, "This Decade was Different."

Insiders had known for years that Lyman had been the moving force behind many of the organization's innovations during the administrations of Emmeline B. Wells and Clarissa S. Williams. Both women welcomed Lyman's assumption of responsibilities large and small, and Williams especially gave strong support to Lyman's welfare work.³⁵ This included her activities outside the Social Service Department. In 1922 Lyman won election to the state legislature, primarily to introduce the enabling act providing for the state's acceptance of the matching fund provisions of the Federal Maternity and Infancy Act of 1921, better known as the Sheppard-Towner Act. After its passage, the Relief Society cooperated in the administration of these funds, which resulted in a 19 percent drop in infant mortality in the state by 1928, and an 8 percent drop in maternal mortality during the same period.³⁶ In 1928 and 1929 Lyman mobilized the resources of the Relief Society in an intensive lobbying effort which resulted in the creation of the Utah State Training School for the Feeble Minded.³⁷ Lyman's emphasis on social welfare activities was no doubt driven by her close experience dealing with problems of the community, state, and church. Over the years she noted that those who did not directly participate in welfare work were not fully able to understand the pressing needs involved and thus did not realize its importance.³⁸

A short time after Cannon's conversation with Grant, Clarissa Williams resigned and her counselor, Louise Y. Robison, was appointed the new general president in October 1928. She chose Lyman to be her first counselor. In contrast to the close relationship Lyman enjoyed with both Wells and Williams, that with Robison was strained. Coworkers have cited possible reasons to account for this, including the fact that Robison came to her position as a relative unknown in contrast to Lyman who was already a prominent figure in the church and state and was widely respected for her accomplishments. Another reason may be rooted in differences in personality and interests between Robison and her forceful and outspoken first counselor. More reserved than Lyman, Robison has been described as "a woman's woman," noted for her kind heart and sympathetic manner

35. Williams's support was strengthened, no doubt, by the close friendship the two women enjoyed. She and Lyman not only worked together but socialized in the same circles and belonged to some of the same clubs. Telephone conversation with Amy Lyman Engar, 2 Feb. 1994.

36. Heffner, "The National Women's Relief Society," 256-63; Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 82-84; Pohlman Oral History.

37. Pohlman Oral History; Allen Oral History; Lewis Oral History; "Utah Provides for the Care of the Feeble-Minded," *Relief Society Magazine* 16 (May 1929): 253-54; Heffner, "This Decade Was Different," 70. By all accounts, Lyman was the motivating force behind the Relief Society's lobbying effort in the interest of the State Training School.

38. Wintch Oral History; Pohlman Oral History.

while her interests centered around what was then considered the feminine sphere. Though she showed some interest in child welfare work, and served on community and state welfare boards because of her position as Relief Society president, she did not herself initiate Relief Society social welfare participation in the interest of community and public welfare. Robison did not seem as driven in social welfare matters with the same passion as Lyman, and indeed over the years of her presidency some felt that she seemed to show a lack of interest in the affairs of the Social Service Department which Lyman continued to manage. Robison did, however, cooperate with some of Lyman's activities, including the statewide petition drive by Relief Society women in support of the state training school. But according to her own estimation, the eleven years of the Robison presidency were most noted for her furthering the general board's work in the Burial Clothes Department, establishment of the Mormon Handicraft shop to aid homemakers supplement their income during the Depression, and her efforts to increase circulation of the *Relief Society Magazine*.³⁹ Lyman did not openly discuss the strain in their relationship but by the early to mid-1930s coworkers were sensing it and noted that Lyman's accomplishments and activities both within and outside of the Social Service Department were given diminished recognition while her talents were underused.⁴⁰ But while the years of the Robison administration must have been difficult ones for Lyman, her devotion to the church and loyalty to the Relief Society permitted no complaint, and publicly she had only praise for the general president.⁴¹

A year after Robison became Relief Society president, the stock market crash ushered in the Great Depression. It was not long before Utah's economy, heavily dependent on agriculture and mining, was suffering the

39. Derr, Cannon and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, esp. chap. 8, "Dark Days—The Great Depression, 1928-1940," 248-275; Relief Society, *A Centenary of Relief Society, 1842-1942* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1942), 13. Contemporaries would add the Singing Mothers choral groups to this list. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History.

40. For the relationship between the two women, see Parry D. Sorenson Oral History, interview by David Hall, 1992, tapes in my possession; Wintch Oral History; Driggs Oral History; Pohlman Oral History. In addition to her work in the Social Service Department, Lyman's activities during the Robison administration included: work on a Relief Society handbook with Annie Wells Cannon and Vera W. Pohlman which was published in 1931; activities in local and national social welfare organizations and the National Council of Women; and continued association with the training school as a member of its board of trustees.

41. Lyman even gave Robison credit for some of her own accomplishments. See, for example, Lyman's account of the creation of the Utah State Training School, in *Handbook of the Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1931), 60.

full effects of the crisis. Throughout the decade of the 1930s Utah experienced high unemployment and depended heavily on public welfare. During the early months and years of the Depression, the church joined with other charitable agencies in the community to marshal scarce relief funds and to create some limited work projects, but these efforts were overwhelmed by the sheer scope of the emergency.⁴² As part of the church's efforts to cut administrative costs to devote more of its resources to aiding the poor, during the summer of 1930 the Presiding Bishopric encouraged the Social Service Department to trim its staff and to concentrate on training unpaid stake and ward workers to perform their duties at the local level rather than to refer them to the central office. As part of this effort, the Social Service Institutes, which had not been held since the fall of 1928, were scheduled again at the request of the Presiding Bishopric. The first was held during the summer of 1930, and two more during 1931.⁴³

When the Depression hit, Lyman had been deeply involved in social work for more than a decade, and from her years of experience she knew that even in the best of times resources for relief had always been inadequate. As the Depression deepened, like others across the nation, she began to look to the federal government to obtain funds that could not be found either through private agencies like the church or through local or state governments.⁴⁴ When U.S. president Herbert Hoover signed the Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Act in July 1932, which allowed the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to loan relief funds to local governments who could certify that they lacked adequate resources, Lyman cooperated by assembling evidence attesting to the scarcity of funds as requested by Salt Lake County and the state's new Welfare Committee. Losing no time, she collected statistics and sample case histories, which were then presented as evidence of need at a special hearing held by federal agents at the state capital.⁴⁵ The county received its loan and the Relief Society Social Service Department cooperated with other agencies in the area to dispense the aid it provided to those in need. Private charities like the Relief Society were asked to assume this role because they already employed trained social workers and because they possessed the administrative structure to allocate relief effectively while the counties still lacked both. During this period, in addition to usual case work, Lyman and the

42. State of Utah, *First Biennial Report*, 3-4; Garth L. Mangum and Bruce D. Blumell, *The Mormons' War on Poverty* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1993), chap. 6, "Response to the Great Depression," 93-129.

43. Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 246; Mangum and Blumell, 99-100.

44. Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 251.

45. *Ibid.*, 250-52; Lewis Oral History; State of Utah, 4.

department's staff were responsible for issuing food, clothing, and fuel orders for church members from commodities in a county warehouse.⁴⁶

The election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, and the enactment of the New Deal, brought continued cooperation between the Relief Society and local, state, and federal governments. Under the new Federal Emergency Relief Administration, rules were established in August 1933 which required federal funds for relief to be distributed through government agencies rather than by cooperating (private) agencies as had been the case under the RFC. This led to the temporary designation of the Relief Society Social Service Department as District 7 of the County Welfare Department. As such, it remained responsible for disbursement of public relief to LDS church members while the Salt Lake County Welfare Department expanded its staff.⁴⁷ By December 1934 the county gained the administrative capability to serve all applicants for federal aid and public work relief, thereby lessening the workload of the Social Service Department's staff. For a time it seemed that with this new aid the county would be able to handle all direct relief needs, and Lyman and others felt that the Relief Society Social Service Department would again be free to concentrate its resources on preventative work and counseling.⁴⁸

Most veteran social workers like Amy Brown Lyman saw the federal government's assumption of responsibility for relief as inevitable. Many in private agencies had long been involved in a cooperative relationship with government, viewing it as a resource to be used for the common good. Lyman herself had worked closely with government at all levels over the years in a number of causes. In the early 1920s she had successfully pressured county authorities to provide more aid for the indigent.⁴⁹ Her activities on behalf of the Sheppard-Towner Act and the state training school similarly signaled a willingness to turn to government resources for the resolution of social problems. Likewise during the early years of the New Deal, Lyman had advocated government action in such areas as unemployment insurance and old-age pensions.⁵⁰ While many church

46. Pohlman Oral History; Lewis Oral History; Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 251-52.

47. While the county was expanding its welfare department, its director approached Lyman for a list of experienced social workers she could recommend for employment. Several Social Service Department workers moved to the county at that time. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History; Lewis Oral History.

48. Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, 254-55; Pohlman Oral History; Lewis Oral History; Wintch Oral History; Derr, 256-57.

49. In Lyman, "Social Service Work," 13, Amy wrote, "It has been the constant aim of the Relief Society to point out to the County its responsibility in caring for its indigent families." Lyman herself no doubt represented the Relief Society in this matter.

50. See, for example, "State Body for Social Work Urged: L.D.S. Relief Society Starts

leaders shared these views about the role of government, this was not true of all.

In particular, counselor in the First Presidency J. Reuben Clark disapproved of LDS families receiving public, rather than church, relief. A veteran of long government service, he feared the corruptive influence of such aid no matter what form it took. Clark seemed to feel that anything coming from the government was a dole. As an ardent Republican, he especially feared the Democratic doles of the Roosevelt administration.⁵¹

Hoping to restore the church to its frontier ideal of taking care of its own, Clark initially found little encouragement for his views among church leaders. Those like Lyman, directly involved in relief, knew the church lacked the resources needed at such times of widespread crisis. While Lyman and many others were not blind to the problems, both actual and potential, that came with government relief, in light of the then current magnitude of need they were not opposed to federal help. Clark, however, remained convinced that a change had to come and patiently worked to gain the support of other church leaders, especially President Heber J. Grant. His opportunity finally arrived late in 1935, when general frustration with New Deal relief efforts made it possible to move ahead with his plans. In April 1936, with the support of President Grant, he announced establishment of the Church Security Plan, soon renamed the Church Welfare Plan.⁵²

Clark's efforts brought many positive changes to the administration of church relief: it coordinated activities and brought more abundant church resources to the task. While Lyman and other experienced workers realized from the outset that even these additional resources would prove inadequate to the goal of meeting LDS relief needs, the welfare program did provide an important supplement to overburdened and inadequate federal efforts.⁵³

The crisis of the Great Depression and the resulting programs of the New Deal are seen by historians as a watershed event in the transfer of responsibility for charity from private organizations to government agen-

Plans to Create Central Bureau," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 Apr. 1933, 1; "Job Insurance Advocated by Relief Society Leader: Mrs. Lyman Urges Women to Sponsor Reforms in Social Legislation," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 9 Oct. 1934, 6.

51. Pohlman Oral History. For a discussion on Clark and the development of the Welfare Plan, see D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1983), 251-78. The material for this discussion of Clark's activities is drawn from Quinn's treatment.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Pohlman Oral History; "Vera W. Pohlman, Director of Research and Statistics [State Department of Public Welfare] to Mrs. Burton W. Musser," 20 June 1939, typescript, Amy Brown Lyman Collection.

cies, thus marking the decline of private relief activities.⁵⁴ The Church Welfare Program similarly affected Relief Society charity efforts, for while the organization remained active, it did so at the price of lessened autonomy. Instead of raising ward charity funds for their own activities, Relief Society women were now turning their efforts to help fill bishops storehouses.

Considering the Relief Society general board's leading role in LDS charity efforts of the 1920s and 1930s, it seems odd that Clark did not consult either President Louise Y. Robison or Amy Brown Lyman while formulating his own plans.⁵⁵ It is not known what Lyman thought about this—if she had any concerns, she kept them to herself. When the plan was first announced, the part the Relief Society was to play remained unclear and an unexpected change in her responsibilities prevented Lyman from initially contributing to the definition of a new role for the organization. In June 1936, Richard, a member of the church's Quorum of Twelve Apostles since 1918, was called to preside over the European Mission. Amy was to accompany him and take charge of the women's work there.⁵⁶

In their absence responsibilities began to take shape: within the framework of the new Church Welfare Plan an important role remained for Relief Society women. Although Relief Society welfare projects were now under the direction of the all-male priesthood through the Church Welfare Committee, and it was reaffirmed that local Relief Society leaders were subject to the direction of their bishops in charity matters, properly trained ward Relief Society presidents and stake social service aides were needed to clear cases and advise the bishops and stake presidents in local relief matters. President Louise Y. Robison seems to have remained unsure, however, as to the Relief Society's role in the new program. This led to complaints such as that from the Church Welfare Committee in October 1938 that the Relief Society was showing a "lack of interest and cooperation."⁵⁷ In light of Lyman's experience with inter-agency cooperation in matters of social welfare work, it does not seem surprising that shortly after her return from Europe in September 1938 she was called on to facilitate increased Relief Society support of the Church Welfare Plan by presiding over a new series of Social Service Institutes beginning in the spring of 1939. These were

54. Muncy, *Female Dominion*, esp. chap. 5, "Contraction and Dissolution of the Female Dominion," 153-57.

55. Mangum and Blumell, 143-44.

56. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 123; Mangum and Blumell, 143. In addition to the Relief Society, Amy was responsible for the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association and the Primary Association.

57. Mangum and Blumell, 144.

intended to train those Relief Society women with assigned roles as stake and ward presidents and social service aides.⁵⁸

Lyman's call to serve as Relief Society general president shortly thereafter, in January 1940, seemed to provide her with an opportunity to fully institutionalize her approach to charity work, and many anticipated a dynamic and exciting period for the organization. Sadly, World War II and personal tragedy prevented the full achievement of her goals.

Many of her efforts as president revolved around the Social Service Department and the Relief Society's role in the Welfare Plan. Lyman marshalled the Relief Society into a position of enthusiastic support for the Welfare Plan and earned the gratitude of the First Presidency in the process.⁵⁹ Seeking to make the program function more effectively, she hoped to rectify a problem involving stake and ward social service aides. Because of the lay character of Mormonism's local leadership, these aides typically moved on to new callings just when they were becoming skilled at evaluating the needs of families requiring assistance. Lyman felt that some sort of continuity must be established in order to ensure proper functioning of the Welfare Plan. To facilitate this she assigned general secretary-treasurer Vera W. Pohlman to work on a reference manual for distribution to the stakes. Drawing on the experience that Relief Society workers had gained over the previous two decades, Pohlman produced drafts ready to be tested in several wards by 1941.⁶⁰ In September 1940, Lyman also sought to extend the services of the Social Service Department by arranging for a branch office to be opened to provide a confidential exchange, employment services, and counseling to church members referred by bishops in the Ogden area.⁶¹ Hoping to continue the steps taken in 1939 to resume the Social Service Institutes, Lyman saw that another series of courses was planned, but only two were held before wartime

58. Derr, "Changing Relief Society Charity," 262. Eventually, Relief Society presidents were included in all welfare committees—general, stake and ward, with the ward president assigned the responsibility of aiding the ward bishop in welfare matters. Pohlman to Hall, 15 Dec. 1993.

59. While recognizing the laudatory tone of such letters generally, it seems significant that upon Lyman's release the First Presidency especially credited the Relief Society under her direction with being largely responsible for the success of the Welfare Plan. This stands in sharp contrast to the lack of cooperation complained of by the Central Welfare Committee in 1938. "The First Presidency to President Amy Brown Lyman and Officers and Members of the National Women's Relief Society General Board," 4 Apr. 1945, copy in my possession.

60. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History.

61. Lyman, *In Retrospect*, 151; Wintch Oral History. A similar office had been opened in Los Angeles in 1934 to serve the large Mormon community in southern California.

restrictions on travel following Pearl Harbor forced the Relief Society to divert its energies to other tasks.⁶²

Lyman was fully committed to supporting the war effort and was willing to wait patiently until hostilities were over to pursue her goals for the Relief Society, but an unexpected personal tragedy proved a final blow to her plans: the November 1943 excommunication of her husband Richard.⁶³ Despite recommendations from some church leaders that she leave him, the Lymans remained together and rebuilt their marriage.⁶⁴ But Amy came increasingly to feel that the incident had destroyed her ability to lead the women of the church.⁶⁵ Aware of the rumors and speculation about the incident that circulated throughout the Mormon community, by October 1944 she felt compelled to submit her resignation to President Heber J. Grant. After waiting six months, Grant accepted it and released Lyman honorably in April 1945.

Typically, during that final six-month period Lyman did not shrink from her duties. As the winter of 1944-45 began, it became clear that the end of the war was approaching so she authorized steps to prepare the Relief Society for the post-war period. Lyman sent Belle Spafford and Vera Pohlman on a trip through the western United States to evaluate conditions in local Relief Societies and to determine their needs. Lyman continued to be especially concerned that the social service handbook be completed and distributed before her release. The text had been approved by the general authorities and the type had been set in preparation for publication when the new general presidency took office. Lyman considered the information contained in that small volume to be a vital part of the Welfare Plan, and it was an important symbol of continuity with the work previously performed by Relief Society women. But after her release, the organization turned its attention to other goals and the manual was never published.⁶⁶

62. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History.

63. Richard's excommunication and expulsion from the Quorum of the Twelve for "violation of the Christian law of Chastity" made headlines across the nation. See *Deseret News*, 12 Nov. 1943; *Los Angeles Times*, 13 Nov. 1943; *New York Times*, 14 Nov. 1943.

64. Richard was rebaptized into the church in November 1954. Engar Oral History.

65. Vera Pohlman remembers one factor that contributed to these feelings: Lyman often rode the streetcar from her home on Third Avenue to the offices of the Relief Society across from Temple Square. Always private about her personal matters, after Richard's excommunication she found the stares and whispered comments encountered on this daily trip especially hard to bear. Pohlman often bought taxi tickets for Lyman to spare her this embarrassment (Pohlman Oral History). Sadly, the discomfort Richard's excommunication caused the church eventually obscured not only his own contributions, but those of Amy as well. Thus one of the most important figures in Mormon history remains largely unknown to the present generation.

66. Pohlman Oral History; Wintch Oral History. To this day there remains a gap in the functioning of the Welfare Program which this manual was designed to fill.

While this was surely a final disappointment at the end of a long career of service and accomplishment in the field of social welfare, Lyman did not dwell on it. She enjoyed an active "retirement" until her death in December 1959 and remained involved in club work and civic organizations and of course the Relief Society.⁶⁷ Though it was not her nature to look back, if during the last decade and a half of her life she chose to reflect, she could find satisfaction with a career filled with impressive accomplishments. Treading her way along a difficult path, she was responsible for the modernization of LDS charity activities and establishment of the Relief Society Social Service Department which became, after fifty years of continuous service, the LDS Social Services. Dealing with divergent personalities and diminishing roles for women in the church, she made the most out of each situation she encountered. Lyman's efforts left an indelible mark on the church, the larger community, and perhaps most importantly, on a generation of Relief Society women. The Social Service Institutes which she initiated and presided over provided training to more than 4,000 students, while through the educational curriculum of the organization countless Relief Society women were schooled in modern methods of understanding personal and societal problems and encouraged to take a meaningful part in their resolution.⁶⁸ If at the end of her long career, war and personal tragedy prevented culmination of some of her accomplishments while obscuring others, she nevertheless left an important legacy which remains vital and inspiring today.

67. Lyman taught the monthly literature lessons in her ward Relief Society until her death. Engar Oral History.

68. "Centenary of Relief Society," 42; Pohlman Oral History.