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TO THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS:-

The experience of mankind has shown that the people of communities and nations among whom wealth is the most equally distributed, enjoy the largest degree of liberty, are the least exposed to tyranny and oppression and suffer the least from luxurious habits which beget vice. Among the chosen people of the Lord, to prevent the too rapid growth of wealth and its accumulation in a few hands, he ordained that in every seventh year the debtors were to be released from their debts, and, where a man had sold himself to his brother, he was in that year to be released from slavery and to go free; even the land itself which might pass out of the possession of its owner by his sale of it, whether through his improvidence, mismanagement, or misfortune, could only be alienated until the year of jubilee. At the expiration of every forty-nine years the land reverted, without cost, to the man or family whose inheritance originally it was, except in the case of a dwelling house in a walled city, for the redemption of which, one year only was allowed, after which, if not redeemed, it became the property, without change at the year of jubilee, of the purchaser. Under such a system, carefully maintained, there could be no great aggregations of either real or personal property in the hands of a few; especially so while the laws, forbidding the taking of usury or interest for money or property loaned, continued in force.

One of the great evils with which our own nation is menaced at the present time is the wonderful growth of wealth in the hands of a comparatively few individuals. The very liberties for which our fathers contended so steadfastly and courageously, and which they bequeathed to us as a priceless legacy, are endangered by the monstrous power which this accumulation of wealth gives to a few individuals and a few powerful corporations. By its seductive influence results are accomplished which, were it more equally distributed, would be impossible under our form of government. It threatens to give shape to the legislation, both State and National, of the entire country. If this evil should not be checked, and measures not be taken to prevent the continued enormous growth of riches among the class already rich, and the painful increase of destitution and want among the poor, the nation is liable to

be overtaken by disaster; for, according to history, such a tendency among nations once powerful was the sure precursor of ruin. The evidence of the restiveness of the people under this condition of affairs in our times is witnessed in the formation of societies of grangers, of patrons of husbandry, trades' unions, etc., etc., combinations of the productive and working classes against capital.

Years ago it was perceived that we Latter-day Saints were open to the same dangers as those which beset the rest of the world. A condition of affairs existed among us which was favorable to the growth of riches in the hands of a few at the expense of the many. A wealthy class was being rapidly formed in our midst whose interests, in the course of time, were likely to be diverse from those of the rest of the community. The growth of such a class was dangerous to our union; and, of all people, we stand most in need of union and to have our interests identical. Then it was that the Saints were counseled to enter into co-operation. In the absence of the necessary faith to enter upon a more perfect order revealed by the Lord unto the church, this was felt to be the best means of drawing us together and making us one. Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution was organized, and, throughout the Territory, the mercantile business of the various Wards and Settlements was organized after that pattern. Not only was the mercantile business thus organized, but at various places branches of mechanical, manufacturing and other productive industries were established upon this basis. To-day, therefore, co-operation among us is no untried experiment. It has been tested, and whenever fairly tested, and under proper management, its results have been most gratifying and fully equal to all that was expected of it, though many attempts have been made to disparage and decry it, to destroy the confidence of the people in it and have it prove a failure. From the day that Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution was organized until this day it has had a formidable and combined opposition to contend with, and the most base and unscrupulous methods have been adopted, by those who have no interest for the welfare of the people, to destroy its credit. Without alluding to the private assaults upon its credit which have been made by those who felt that it was

in their way and who wished to ruin it, the perusal alone of the telegraphic dispatches and correspondence to newspapers which became public, would exhibit how unparalleled, in the history of mercantile enterprises, has been the hostility it has had to encounter. That it has lived, notwithstanding these bitter and malignant attacks upon it and its credit, is one of the most valuable proofs of the practical worth of co-operation to us as a people. Up to this day Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution has had no note go to protest; no firm, by dealing with it, has ever lost a dollar; its business transactions have been satisfactory to its creditors and yet its purchases have amounted to fifteen millions of dollars! What firm in all this broad land can point to a brighter or more honorable record than this? During the first four years and a half of its existence it paid to its stockholders a dividend in cash of seventy-eight per cent and fifty-two per cent, as a reserve to be added to the capital stock, making in all a dividend of one hundred and thirty per cent. The Institution declared as dividends, and reserves added to the capital stock, and tithing, during those four and a half years, upwards of half a million of dollars. So that the stockholder who invested one thousand dollars in the Institution in March, 1869, had by October 1st, 1873, that stock increased to \$1,617.00, and this without counting his cash dividends, which in the same space of time would have amounted to \$1,378.50! In other words, a stockholder who had deposited \$1000.00 in the Institution when it started, could have sold, in four years and a half afterwards, stock to the amount of \$617.00, collected dividends to the amount of \$1,378.50, thus making the actual profits \$1,995.50, or within a fraction (\$4.50) of two hundred per cent upon the original investment, and still have had his \$1,000 left intact! This is a statement from the books of the Institution, and realized by hundreds of its stockholders. And yet there are those who decry co-operation and say it will not succeed! If success consists in paying large dividends, then it cannot be said that Z. C. M. I. has not succeeded. In fact, the chief cause of the trouble has been, it has paid too freely and too well. Its reserves should not have been added, as they were, to capital stock; for, by so doing, at the next semi-annual declaration of dividends a dividend was declared upon them, which, as will be perceived, swelled the dividends enormously and kept the Institution stripped too bare of resources to meet whatever contingencies might arise.

It was not for the purpose alone, however, of making money, of declaring large dividends, that Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution was established. A higher object than this prompted its organization. A union of interests was sought to be attained. At the time co-operation was entered upon, the Latter-day Saints were acting in utter disregard of the principles of self-preservation. They were encouraging the growth of evils in their own midst which they condemned as the worst features of the systems from which they had been gathered. Large profits were being concentrated in comparatively few hands, instead of being generally distributed among the people. As a consequence, the community was being rapidly divided into classes, and the hateful and unhappy distinctions which the possession and lack of wealth give rise to, were becoming painfully apparent. When the proposition to organize Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution was broached, it was hoped that the community at large would become its stockholders; for if a few individuals only were to own its stock, the advantages to the community would be limited. The people, therefore, were urged to take shares, and large numbers responded to the appeal. As we have shown, the business proved to be as successful as its most sanguine friends anticipated. But the distribution of profits among the community was not the only benefit conferred by the organization of co-operation among us. The public at large who did not buy at its stores derived profits, in that the old practice of dealing which prompted traders to increase the price of an article because of its scarcity, was abandoned. Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution declined to be a party to making a corner upon any article of merchandise because of the limited supply in the market. From its organization until the present it has never advanced the price; of any article because of its scarcity. Goods therefore in this Territory have been sold at something like fixed rates and reasonable profits since the Institution has had an existence, and practices which are deemed legitimate in some parts of the trading world, and by which, in this Territory, the necessities of consumers were taken advantage of--as, for instance, the selling of sugar at a dollar a pound, and domestics, coffee, tobacco and other articles at an enormous advance over original cost because of their scarcity here--have not been indulged in. In this result the purchasers of

goods who have been opposed to co-operation, have shared equally with its patrons.

We appeal to the experience of every old settler in this Territory for the truth of what is here stated. They must vividly remember that goods were sold here at prices which the necessities of the people compelled them to pay, and not at cost and transportation, with the addition of a reasonable profit. The railroad, it is true, has made great changes in our method of doing business. But let a blockade occur, and the supply of some necessary article be very limited in our market, can we suppose that traders have so changed in the lapse of a few years that, if there were no check upon them, they would not put up the price of that article in proportion as the necessities of the people made it desirable? They would be untrue to all the training and traditions of their craft if they did not. And it is because this craft is in danger that such an outcry is made against cooperation. Can anyone wonder that it should be so, when he remembers that, from the days of Demetrius who made silver shrines for the goddess Diana at Ephesus down to our own times, members of crafts have made constant war upon innovations that were likely to injure their business?

Co-operation has submitted in silence to a great many attacks. Its friends have been content to let it endure the ordeal. But it is now time to speak. The Latter-day Saints should understand that it is our duty to sustain co-operation and to do all in our power to make it a success. At a meeting of the stockholders of the Institution at the time of the General Conference a committee of seventeen was chosen to select and arrange for the purchase of a suitable piece of ground for a store and to proceed to erect upon it such a fireproof building as would answer the purposes of the Institution. The objects in view in this proceeding were to concentrate the business and thereby lessen the cost of handling and disposing of the goods and to decrease rent and insurance. The saving in these directions alone, not to mention other advantages which must result from having such a store, will make a not inconsiderable dividend upon the stock. A suitable piece of ground has been secured. and upon terms which are deemed advantageous, and steps have been taken towards the erection of a proper building. But the Institution, to erect this building and carry on its business properly, needs more capital. The determination is still to sell goods as low as possible. By turning over the capital

three or four times during the year they can be sold at very low figures, and at but a slight advance over cost and carriage, and yet the stockholders have a handsome dividend. To purchase goods to the greatest advantage the Institution should have the money with which to purchase of first hands. To effect this important result, as well as to unite in our mercantile affairs, the Institution should receive the cordial support of every Latter-day Saint. Everyone who can should take stock in it. By sustaining the Co-operative Institution, and taking stock in it, profits that would otherwise go to a few individuals will be distributed among many hundreds. Stockholders should interest themselves in the business of the Institution. It is their own, and if suggestions are needed, or any corrections ought to be made, it is to their interest to make them.

The Institution has opened a retail store within a few weeks, one of the old-fashioned kind, in which everything required by the public is sold. This should receive the patronage of all the well-wishers of co-operation. In the settlements, also, the local co-operative stores should have the cordial support of the Latter-day Saints. Does not all our history impress upon us the great truth that in union is strength? Without it, what power would the Latter-day Saints have? But it is not in doctrines alone that we should be united, but in practice and especially in our business affairs.

Your Brethren,

BRIGHAM YOUNG,
GEORGE A. SMITH,
DANIEL H. WELLS,
JOHN TAYLOR,
WILFORD WOODRUFF,
ORSON HYDE,
ORSON PRATT,
CHARLES C. RICH,
LORENZO SNOW,
ERASTUS SNOW,
FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS,
GEORGE Q. CANNON,
BRIGHAM YOUNG, JUN.,
ALBERT CARRINGTON.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH TERRITORY
JULY 10TH, 1875.