

prepared by the counselors, I decided that the Church should be consistent in its instructions to all members regarding their joining the John Bird Society; namely, that they are free to do so as long as they do not use the Church in any way in furthering membership in the Society, and also that Church buildings not be used for holding meetings of that Society, etc.

I therefore instructed Elder Dyer that he should return the letter to the Secretary to the First Presidency [Joseph Anderson] with the instructions that he re-write the letter omitting the last paragraph stating that "it would be inadvisable for Presidents of Stakes, Bishops of wards, and others in Church leadership positions to become affiliated with the John Birch Society, etc."

I stated that that paragraph amounted to telling [the stake president and his wife] that they should get out of the Society; and that I felt the Church should not dictate to them what they could do in matters of this kind; that they had their free agency to do as they wished, so long as they adhere to the policy of not using the Church to further the interests of this society.

December 6, 1967, First Presidency meeting. President [N. Eldon] Tanner mentioned a matter that had been discussed by us a short time ago pertaining to [the stake president] who reports that he and his wife had joined the John Birch Society and he asks whether it would be proper for them to show a picture to the Priesthood that had been prepared by these John Birch people. When the matter was discussed previously by us, it was decided to write [the stake president], telling him that he should not show this picture to the Priesthood, and that while everyone has his free agency relative to joining organizations of this kind, we think it inadvisable for Stake presidents, Bishops, and other Church leaders to become affiliated with the Society because of the influence it would have upon members of the Church under their jurisdiction.

President Tanner presented a letter that had been prepared to [send] to this effect, which letter was signed by President Joseph Fielding Smith and President Nathan Eldon Tanner, and which had not as yet been presented to President [Hugh B.] Brown for his signature, but President Brown said that he would wish to sign it. However, the letter was returned with the notation that the concluding paragraph should be

eliminated. This was the paragraph in which reference was made to the inadvisability of Presidents of Stakes and other Church leaders becoming affiliated with this organization and similar organizations. When the letter was returned, asking that this paragraph be deleted, it was stated that I wanted the last paragraph deleted.

President Brown said that the letter as written represented what the First Presidency had decided, and he did not understand why the last paragraph should be deleted, although both Presidents Brown and Tanner said that if that was my desire, of course, they wanted to do what I felt should be done.

President Tanner said that it was his feeling that our position should be made clear because we are accused from time to time that the Church is backing the John Birch Society. If our Stake Presidents and Bishops were to join the organization and begin to hold meetings and show pictures and lectures, it certainly would look as though the Church was in favor of it. (It is understood that no member can use the Church for John Birch Society meetings.)

I said that I think the least we have to do with the Birch Society the better.

Presidents Brown, Tanner, and Smith felt that the letter should go as it was originally written, without the proposed deletion.

The letter as originally written was read and I also read it personally. In answer to an inquiry as to whether I am willing that my signature be attached to the letter without the concluding paragraph being deleted, I said that I was [willing to do so]. ...

President Tanner reported that following the First Presidency's meeting on Wednesday last, when the box was opened containing certain papyri that had been turned over to the Church through President Tanner by the director of the National Museum of Art in New York, these items were taken to the Council of the Twelve the following day and shown to the brethren for their information. Of particular interest was the original of facsimile #1 that appears in the Book of Abraham. It was agreed that these papyri should be sent to the Brigham Young University for safekeeping. President Tanner said that he got in touch with President [Ernest L.] Wilkinson, ascertained that they had a place of safekeeping and he said the place they have would be as safe as any place he knew of. President Tanner

explained to him that we want to make the papyri available to Dr. Hugh Nibley to continue his studies, with which President Wilkinson agreed.²² President Tanner explained that at the meeting with the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve, it was decided that we would keep the original of facsimile #1 in safekeeping here. It is not in proper shape for preservation in its present condition and is very fragile, so yesterday Hugh Nibley and the assistant to the curator at the BYU came up and President Tanner and Howard Hunter, who were assigned by the Council to take care of these things, turned over these documents in the wooden box to Dr. Nibley and this other brother, with the understanding that they would properly preserve them in glass and that they would take the necessary measures to provide proper preservation for the original facsimile #1, and return it to us so that we can place it in safekeeping here until such time as it should be decided where it might be placed permanently.

President Tanner explained that the way they take care of these items is to build up the humidity to what it should be, place the papyri under glass and seal it so that no air or moisture can get into it. In that way it can be preserved indefinitely. President Tanner said that Dr. Nibley suggested that one of these papyri, which is perhaps of least importance, might be placed with pictures of the collection in a window here where people could see them. He did not feel that we should display the originals. President Brown suggested that every precaution be taken to make certain that nothing shall happen to these papyri and that we will know where they are.

I asked President Tanner if he is sure that everything is all right, and President Tanner said that he felt quite satisfied with it, and I said that we would hold President Tanner responsible for it.

December 7, 1967. Elder Mark E. Petersen said that the Church Information Service would appreciate some help on a matter that may give some concern. He said that with George Romney entering the political

22. When it was all over, Nibley confessed that since he was “not yet confident in Egyptian, I frankly skirmished and sparred for time, making the most of those sources which support the Book of Abraham from another side, the recent and growing writing, ancient and modern, about the forgotten legends and traditions of Abraham.” His involvement was nevertheless crucial for the church’s early interpretation of the artifacts, even if it created an apologetic wall around the topic. Nibley, *Nibley on the Timely and Timeless*, xxxvi; Petersen, *Hugh Nibley*, 317