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The “Environmental Impact” of a Profession!

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I was asked to spend a few minutes talking about what impact my membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has had upon my profession. I grew up in Vernal, Utah, where my father was a lawyer and ran a cattle ranch as well. It was during my formative years in Vernal that I developed a great love for people, for the land, and for animals.

My mom and dad raised four children teaching us all good work ethics and an appreciation for the Lord’s impact on our lives. My parents encouraged us to recognize that whatever we did we should do it well and realize the impact that we had upon whatever environment we associated with.

It is for this reason I choose today to focus on the environmental impact that various professions can have on the world and how we can have the most positive influence.

I would like to introduce the concept of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As societies advanced and multiplied it became apparent to governments that large projects and changing technologies could have a significant impact on the environment. Hence, the requirement was established to develop EIS to evaluate if new projects should be allowed.

These required reports outline the predicted environmental effects a project will have. The studies attempt to evaluate the possible social, economic, and environmental changes that may occur as a result of the particular activity. Most of the statements are mandated by the National Environmental Protection Act. In 1969, Congress wrote the following:

The Congress, recognizing the profound impact of man's activity on the interrelations of all components of the natural environment, particularly the profound influences of population growth, high-density urbanization, industrial expansion, resource exploitation, and new and expanding technological advances and recognizing further the critical importance of restoring and maintaining environmental quality to the overall welfare and development of man, declares that it is the continuing policy of the Federal Government, in cooperation with State and local governments, and other concerned public and private organizations, to use all practicable means and measures, including financial and technical assistance, in a manner calculated to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans.

An EIS outlines, in detail, the proposed actions, alternative actions (including no action), and their probable social, economic, and environmental ramifications.

In my profession, when dealing with nuclear reactors, their fuels, and the fuel cycle activities, I have been involved in the establishment of EIS regulations and evaluation of such statements. During the thirty-five or so years working in my profession, I’ve had the opportunity to work in private industry, in federal government, and in the international/multilateral community. My travels have taken me to more than 130 countries. I have developed friendships with thousands of individuals at all levels of private and governmental organizations. As a result of these experiences, it is clear to me that each of us can play an important role in “shaping and impacting” our various environments!

The influence that we wield in our professional activities can have a significant impact upon our surroundings: either for good or for bad! It is in this context—our environment being our sphere of influence—that I have selected my topic. With this in mind, I will attempt to point out a few of the lessons I have learned.

I have had experiences in assisting developing countries gain a foothold in the use of modern beneficial technologies, such as medical, agricultural, and industrial uses of the atom. One of my assignments, as director of fellows for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), involved the annual evaluation, selection, placement, and training of approximately sixteen thousand doctors, professors, engineers, and scientists from 100 developing countries. I watched as they received their training, returned to their homes, and applied the knowledge and benefits they had derived from their studies. For many, it was a dream, a miracle. As a result of this training, significant changes were brought into their respective lives and environments. I was blessed in the choice of profession I had chosen, and as a result, the work had an impact on and had improved the social conditions of many developing communities. I loved my work!

There are certain traits we can apply in our professions that are reflections of the teachings received through our association as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I would like to review some concepts that reach across the board into many professions.

The first trait relates to our relationship with others. During my years in church and professional service, I thank God for those who are calm instead of contentious. The Lord instructed the Nephites: "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 Nephi 11:29). Contention is the tool of the adversary. Peace is a tool of our Savior. What a majestic gift it is to be able to calm others.

I have observed that contention impedes progress; work slows down. Where contention prevails, there can be no united effort in any purposeful direction. Having sat through hundreds of multilateral gatherings in the United Nations and with our State Department, it is clear that heated arguments and debates should be supplanted by calm discussion, study, listening, and diplomatic negotiation in order to bring order from chaos. We should learn to talk together, listen together, decide together, and avoid all forms of possible contention. Progress towards goals takes place when calm prevails. We must learn to curb our anger. When contention begins, orderly progress is thwarted. I would like to relate an experience I had which exemplifies this point.

I had just arrived in Vienna to my new assignment with the IAEA and was in my office enjoying a beautiful day, when suddenly the door to my office was thrown open and in "stormed" the men in gray—an ambassador and his bodyguards. The diplomats from this particular country are gray: gray suits, gray sweaters, gray hair, and yes, gray beards. He even had a gray walking stick.

For the next ten minutes, without exchanging the normal pleasantries of diplomatic introductions, he harangued me, calling me a direct descendant of the devil, and an employee of a land which is the mother of all whores—among other things. Now, I must mention that I went to Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning Georgia and was quite skilled in the terrible ways of war. You can imagine the thoughts that went through my mind in those few minutes of how to destroy an individual.

Finally, in order to control my temper and not to increase the level of contention, I went to a blackboard and proceeded to ignore the ambassador and wrote several Xs and As and Bs on the board. When he noticed I was not paying attention to him, he became quiet and for the first time sat in a chair by my desk and asked why I was not listening to him! I replied that I wanted to tell him a story.

I then proceeded to tell him about the day my father took me (at age sixteen) to the ranch and asked if I could take a group of cattle and their calves to the mountain to be with the rest of the cattle. I explained that at that age, like all young boys throughout the world, I felt I could do anything. I found out later that he was interested, because he had a son who was sixteen. I told my father that I could do it and climbed on my horse. Dad drove away in the truck, and I proceeded to try to move the cattle

along the trail to the mountain some forty kilometers away.

Unfortunately, I explained, the cattle would not go the proper direction and went left, right, and back—every direction but where they should go. After about thirty minutes of hard work for my horse and myself, I finally stopped and watched the cattle in an effort to find out why they would not go along the path. Much to my surprise, I noticed that they returned to the gate that stopped them from drinking water from a creek on the other side. I simply opened the gate, allowed them to drink, and they proceeded (almost at a run) to the trail to the mountain range. They knew that there was no water for the long trail and needed to drink.

While I was relating this story to the ambassador by placing Xs and As and Bs and drawing a few mountains and a cow or two on the blackboard, I noticed that he calmed down, and I certainly became calmer (the thoughts of how to bring about his demise left my mind). At the end I stated that I learned an important lesson that day. I learned that when confronted with a problem, I must understand what the cause of the problem was, and then I could solve it. I then proceeded to explain to him that I had never been so insulted or verbally attacked by anyone like him before and even though he had yelled at me for more than fifteen minutes, I still didn't know what the problem was.

We went on to identify the misunderstanding that caused his anxiety and, to the extent possible, I corrected the problem. The “end of the story” involved the friendship that developed between the two of us: my visit at his invitation to his country, an exchange of gifts (a copy of the Book of Mormon and the Koran), and a nice note at the death of my mother from him, stating “I know that she is today with God!” All because we eliminated contention and became calm.

We must remain firm in our convictions and conduct ourselves with calm assurance under all circumstances. We must not be manipulated or enraged by those who subtly foster contention over issues of the day.

The Lord said, "Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:30), and "Ye should live in peace one with another" (Mosiah 2:20). Those with the gift of being calm make lasting peace possible. Dealing in the world environment but not becoming “of the world” is a major challenge, and remaining calm and avoiding contention is instrumental to success.

The next point is the need to be dynamic and decisive in dealing with others. During our mission in Cambodia, we held several conferences in the midst of one of the great wonders of the world—Angkor Wat. One historian claims that it is the largest religious edifice in the world and certainly, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful.

As we walked amid the ruins of various structures, it was clear that the people who built it were directed and energetic. The so-called God-Kings were visionaries and hard working. They developed and built the largest city in existence at that time, Angkor Thom (1200–1600s), while the other great world cultures and civilizations had collapsed and disappeared. Rome had burned, Athens had fallen, Persia was captured, Egypt had deteriorated to nothing except the great pyramids, but the great Angkorean Culture thrived. What was to be learned from that experience?

I believe that the lesson stressed the importance of working in an urgent manner. Granted, the genius of the Khmer people still exists in Cambodia, but for some reason things changed. On several occasions I was invited to sit in the councils of the prime minister and with the leaders of private institutions in Cambodia and listened to many discussions on how to improve the economic situation in Cambodia—great leaders with many observations and many reasons why things could not be changed, but none who spoke of vision and of urgency. A city such as Angkor Thom would be impossible to build today in Cambodia due that lack of urgency and energy.

President Spencer W. Kimball often spoke about the importance of urgency and work. At a 1976 conference, he reflected on missionary work:

Our objective is to bring the gospel to all the world. We have hardly skimmed the surface. Some few missionaries move toward their work as though they had all time and eternity to convert a few people in their part of the world. The word is URGENCY—it is now. We must find ways to inspire and teach better ways of doing missionary work.

He continued with specifics:

Could we . . . increase eight or twenty times the present production of converts? If there were 100,000 full-time missionaries, at 4.9 baptisms per year, equals a half million baptisms per year. At that rate it would take twenty thousand years to proselyte the world. . . . That may be all right for you, but it's a little long for me!

True leaders have a positive impact on the environment in which they work. They do this by having vision and urgency!

I would like to return to some scriptures to stress several traits that have significant impact upon the environment we work and live in. Self-motivation and wisdom are critical in bringing about positive changes.

The Lord sent instructions through the Prophet Joseph to church leaders in Zion (Missouri) at a time of crisis:

It is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he *receiveth no reward*. Verily I say, men should be *anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will*, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in *nowise lose their reward*. *But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned"* (Doctrine and Covenants 58:26–29, emphasis added).

I have learned that in order to bring about change one must be “anxiously” involved. In 1991, as I received my new assignment at the IAEA, I found a very inefficient organization prone to many mistakes and incapable of accomplishing the work within the authorized budget. I had a choice, I could continue to use the same procedures and live with the work environment I had inherited from my predecessor, or I could make some changes. In an international environment, with almost forty staff members coming from fifteen countries, I knew that the impact upon the work environment would be significant. With a vision of a much more efficient organization and with apparent calm, I started to make changes.

One day, thirty-two employees filed into my office and stated that they did not like the changes I was making and threatened to quit. One said (talking about the use of computers) that she had heard monitors could cause infertility (she was fifty-eight years old). I promised her that if she would just go along with this and give it a little time, she would be pleased with system.

The product, after more than two years, was a fully automated system with happy staff members working fewer hours but placing more than double the number of fellows within the same budget. Had there been an impact on the working environment? Of course! Had I not been persistent and “anxiously engaged” in a good caused, I would have failed.

The Lord said, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you" (3 Nephi 14:7). In other words, it requires effort on our part. We should not wait to be commanded in all things. We should have the ambition; we should have the desire; we should make up our minds that, so far as our personal talent allows, we will do our full share in the battle of life. It should be a matter of pride that no man or woman shall do more than we will do, in proportion to our ability, for completing our assignments. That has been my

ambition all my life: do my full share. I bear testimony to the fact that my family and I have been blessed as a result.

I note from my experiences in the international community that the particularly powerful leader is often needed at the time of the birth of an organization and at the time of severe crisis. Such crises are not confined to global or national problems. In the realm of one's profession, conditions exist where one is called to be anxiously engaged in matters relating to obedience, hard work, setting goals, etc. There can be "start-up energy" requirements (we call it anxiety) and also crises requiring "anxious" involvement. New or changed assignments require a motivated leader or teacher: the individual who goes beyond what is required: a visionary who sees the needs of the people around him and is "anxiously engaged" in a balance of directive and participative leadership, is in great demand.

Let's look at the way we can become anxiously involved! During my military career, I once studied about a brilliant military strategist, General Von Clausewitz, who observed that in war nothing succeeds that is not simple. The advice fits many working situations, as well. Sometimes the complexities of our involvements in "good causes" are simply overwhelming. We can generate so much paper, so many instructions, and so many handbooks that the simplicity of the basic task at hand is lost in the shuffle. We can smother people with administrative affection and attention. We must keep our tasks relatively simple, recognizing that each action on our part will have an impact on the jobs or lives of others—environmental impact.

Unneeded anxiety also expresses itself in our hurrying, even in good causes. Without proper planning, we find ourselves rushing and being hindered by that red traffic light on the way to an important meeting or task. Thus, we can be "anxiously engaged" in a "good cause" but failing to keep things in the proper perspective, having not chosen "that good part" we spend much time on items that are not truly important.

I recall a new member in Cambodia who, having been called to be the Relief Society president, wondered what she should do. She was a recent convert and had not been instructed nor did she have instructional material. Considering her task of managing the organization with perhaps fifty members, she decided that she would visit all of the sisters and "wash their feet" as Christ had done with his disciples. This was a beneficial task that would allow her to become acquainted with the other sisters in the branch. However, she decided to do it all in two days. She went about it with much urgency and anxiety but at the end of two days she had only visited a few, she became discouraged and gave up on the task. She failed due to the establishment of non-achievable goals. It is important to have "good causes" that are achievable.

The next personal characteristic I feel that is important in the implementation of a global career relates to the development of habits and character. Again I draw from guidance given us by the Lord through His prophets. President Spencer W. Kimball counseled us to take a careful inventory of our habits: "change, comes by substituting good habits for less desirable ones." Then he added, "You mold your character and future by good thoughts and acts." You can make a difference if you develop good habits.

President David O. McKay, stated, "We sow our thoughts, and we reap our actions; we sow our actions, and we reap our habits; we sow our habits, and we reap our characters; we sow our characters, and we reap our destiny." The future he speaks about relates to all of our activities: be it schooling, work assignments, family responsibilities, or social responsibilities. Our habits should be a product of good thoughts, expressed in good works, and sustained by an inner peace and determination in doing what is right.

An individual is not born into this world with fixed habits. We learn through study and through observation and are given the privilege and opportunity of choosing which way of life we will follow—which habits we will form. Solomon the wise taught, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6.)

As a mission president, I was taught to encourage the development of good habits in the young missionaries because habits help form a missionary's character and this remains with him/her the rest of their lives. President Faust, as he called us to serve, said that the success of our mission would not be measured in how many converts, but by what type of persons the missionaries were in fifteen years.

In our work assignments, we do not always know what lies ahead, but there is strength and safety in righteous conduct. We need to organize our lives correctly and chart a proper course. Then when we are placed in a situation where "automatic" responses are required, we must have habits that will aid us in making the right choice.

Initially, it was somewhat tense, as a senior diplomat, not to drink alcoholic beverages at the countless "cocktail" parties. After a while, it became clear that our choice was accepted by others when orange juice started to appear at gatherings we attended. In fact, many of the diplomats preferred juice to the other drinks, and often we would find that the juice was gone. Good habits should be encouraged in those you associate with. I encourage you to form good habits and you will be amazed to see the "impact" on the environment that you will have.

We should become so involved in acquiring good quality traits and participating in character-building activities that there is no time to engage in anything worthless or harmful. Our habits should be those that make us more productive and influential. I would like to summarize these lessons I have discussed and ask the question: Is there a formula for success in our professions?

In conclusion, I would like to mention five points that will help maximize the individual contributions to the environmental impact of our professions:

First, learn to love and serve the people with whom you work. No matter how you feel or what negative things might be said, you must show your love. I think back on one time when I, as a U.S. diplomat, had been badly insulted by an ambassador from a country not friendly to ours. After bearing the verbal abuse for a number of minutes, I went to the person and told him that I wished there was something that I could do to make the hate with which he spoke go away. I promised that I would help him accomplish some of his valid points but not some of the others. He could not believe that I had offered kindness in return for his words of hate. Later, others who observed the exchange of words asked me how I could be kind to someone as belligerent as the ambassador. I responded that I had been taught in my Church's Sunday School classes that I was to love everyone, and though hard at times, I tried my best. As a result of our work, beneficial proposals were made, supported by all countries, that helped the world to be safer.

Second, the boss may not always be right, but he is always the boss. Support your supervisor and respect his or her authority, be obedient, honest, teachable, follow the rules, and you will influence those around you. You will strengthen the boss and in turn he will assist you in achieving your goals.

Third, I believe that hard work is more important than intellect. Applying good habits coupled with the knowledge obtained through study and experience through hard work will allow one to have great influence on one's working environment. Remember what President Benson said, "One of the greatest secrets of missionary work is work. . . . That's the secret—work, work, work. There is no satisfactory substitute. . . ." It is true in your profession as well.

Fourth, never permit contention in your relationships with your supervisors or with those who work for you. Although there may be major cultural differences and work-ethic difference, do not fall into the trap of becoming judgmental. Do not allow yourself to have conflict over issues of minor consequence. Be kind to those you work with, and normally, they will respond in a like manner. I have found that each person is an individual with unique strengths and talents, different from any

other person in the world. Each of us has weaknesses. In harmonious relationships there is teamwork, usually where one is weak, the other is strong. When I first worked at the IAEA, my boss was certainly a challenge to me in all areas that I have spoken about this evening. He attempted to have me drink liquor, he challenged my loyalty to the U.S., he was lazy and not interested at all in the work, but nevertheless he seemed aware of what I was doing all time. In the end, as I returned home, he gave me a beautiful picture as a gift and told me how much he had learned from me about management: always calm, hard working, good habits, and especially the TODO. I was enjoying the conversation until TODO, what was TODO? Then it dawned on me. All those years, when he came to my office, he had been reading my daily “to do list.” Upside down and backwards and was aware of what I had on my agenda at all times. I learned something that day from him about the importance a supervisor places on hard work.

Fifth, make it standard practice that you study and understand those that you associate with. There is something positive to be learned from associations—especially in a global work environment. I believe that each of you present can have a significant and positive impact on your environment. It may be in a classroom, it may be in your family, it may be in your neighborhood, or it just might be as a senior diplomat representing your country. Learn your strengths and weaknesses, work on developing good habits, and live those concepts that you have been taught are right. In doing these things, I promise you that you will have success and you will be happy in what you are doing.

I am grateful for the experiences in life that I have had. Much of the credit goes to my family members, to those who have taught me correct principles, and above all to the Lord who has given me the opportunities to serve professionally in many capacities.

Now, dear brothers, sisters, and friends, life is not easy. In fact, it is often quite difficult, but the Lord is the greatest paymaster in the world. Go forth with a greater commitment of making more positive contributions to your Environmental Impact! I know that the Lord will bless you in your righteous endeavors. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.