

## LIGHTER MINDS

FLASH—BYU IN CHAOS;  
UNIFORMS DECLARED

By C. K. Woodworth



*Can a man in a skirt possibly honor his priesthood?  
Can a woman with a beard fulfill her eternal measure?*

C. K. Woodworth, aka the Remote Correspondent, began the Internet news flasher commentaries on Mormonism in the spring of 1997 with a satirical (and fictitious) report of a Farmer-in-the-Dell scandal in Brigham City, Utah. The adventures and misadventures of this story as it spread through cyberspace were traced in the October 1997 issue of SUNSTONE ("Accidental Author of an Internet Legend"). Since then, more than fifty other fictions have come from the keyboard of the Remote Correspondent, all clearly labelled as fiction but too often taken by unwary readers as true. Many have appeared on the Mormon humor list, which can be subscribed to at <majordomo@Mailing-List.net>. Selected news flashes can also be accessed through the web page of Student Review <www.Studentreview.com>.

MORMON CHURCH-OWNED BRIGHAM Young University has declared a universal campus uniform in the wake of a clothing controversy which has caused this normally quiet campus to disintegrate into chaos.

"Every university must maintain a minimum of order and control in order to accomplish its business," the BYU administration announced on Monday in a decree posted across campus. "For this purpose, therefore, all faculty, staff and students will henceforth be required to wear the following uniforms while on campus or while engaged in university business." The decree stipulates dark trousers and white shirts for men, long dark skirts and white blouses for women, and ends with 126 points enumerating the

details of licit and illicit dress.

The move was prompted by a campus protest that began following a *Student Review* story about an underground women's movement calling themselves "Lady Levites." The original Levites were the tribe of hereditary Jewish priests in biblical times.

As badges of their secret sorority, the BYU women wore Levi's blue jeans, with rank designated by the red, orange, or gold tabs on their pockets. Although *Student Review* stated that the "Lady Levites" did not claim any priestly prerogatives, BYU officials nevertheless began a comprehensive investigation after an anonymous informant declared the blue jeans to be a sign of campus-wide sartorial insubordination.

In the days immediately following the story, covert surveillance by BYU security forces found that nearly 40 percent of the university's co-eds were wearing Levi jeans, and another 70 percent of the male students were also wearing Levi's, presumably in complicity.

On 8 January, BYU president Merrill Q. Baitman issued a statement banning women students (though not men) from wearing any blue jeans while on or off campus.

This new rule, however, was met with a wave of resistance from the normally docile student body.

In an act of protest and solidarity with their female fellows, male BYU students began appearing in class dressed in skirts. Approximately two dozen law students and fourteen football players were subsequently suspended for initiating the action, but this response failed to quash the protest.

Although BYU does have a strict code of dress and grooming standards, officials found that men in skirts were not covered in the detailed guidelines. President Baitman correspondingly issued a second statement on 10 January, banning the wearing of any female attire by male students.

Female students responded to this decree by coming to campus wearing glued-on theatrical beards. BYU's rules prohibit men, but not women, from wearing beards. Approximately forty offending students were suspended for insubordination, and an unknown number were escorted from campus by BYU police while university officials scrambled to write this latest infraction into the official dress code.

Seeking to prevent further disturbances with a catch-all generalization, the new regulation stated that BYU students were forbidden to wear anything "inappropriate or unbecoming to their respective genders."

University officials later regretted their ac-

tions when male students appeared on campus the following day wearing homemade codpieces attached to their trousers.

The students argued that the objects in question had a long history as proper male attire, but they were ejected from campus and their codpieces confiscated. Sixteen students were arrested for failing to surrender the suspect items on demand, though police later reported that most of these had been arrested in error and were subsequently released.

Although most students were apparently

ready to abide by the new uniform standards, a statement issued by "Ms. Merkin" on behalf of the Lady Levites claimed that female students would continue to wear beards underneath their clothing and challenged the administration to stop them.

Meanwhile, at a mandatory student assembly on Thursday, President Baitman upbraided the student body and admonished them to abide by the new dress regulations, saying that they represent "the natural and eternal order and are made in the image of our Heavenly Parents." Baitman especially

condemned the male students in skirts, saying "Amen to the priesthood of that man."

President Baitman's address will be published in a special issue of *Brigham Young Magazine* under the title, "The Unnatural Woman Is an Enemy to Man, The Unnatural Man Is an Enemy to God."

C. K. WOODWORTH, remote correspondent

(I regret to inform you that none of this is true.)



## WINTER SONG

Night comes closer with trains  
that rattle my windows as they  
trip all the crossing switches  
on their way through town.  
Outside the light at 5 p.m. cools,  
spills over the clouds in pinks and blues  
before the sky crystallizes with stars.  
The earth freezes in its rotation  
and the house in its heat hums  
with the breathing rhythm of my parents  
who sleep in a world that collapses  
in cold. Alone on my bed, I'd stare  
at the ceiling until my eyes frosted over  
and long for the love trees receive  
through the leaves in the spring,  
then I'd lose myself in the sung libretto  
of silence and wait until morning  
arrived with another day draped in ice,  
my hands overflowing with snow.

—DOUG MCNAMEE